Compliments! In this edition of SPORD UPDATE, we take a moment to celebrate the milestones and accomplishments of ECA in a challenging yet productive year. We also thank Mr. Antonio Pedro for his leadership over the last year as Acting Executive Secretary and extend a warm welcome to the new Executive Secretary, Mr. Claver Gatete. As part of ECA’s Executive Direction and Management, we look forward to working with him on all the key programmatic priorities of the ECA and in the preparations for the upcoming end of year APPRM. We eagerly anticipate an even more fulfilling 2024 as we further strengthen our partnerships with the subprogrammes.

- Said Adejumobi, Director SPORD

MR. CLAVER GATETE OF RWANDA JOINS THE ECA AS EXECUTIVE SECRETARY AT THE RANK OF UNDER-SECRETARY GENERAL

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres announced on 6 October 2023, the appointment of Mr. Claver Gatete of Rwanda as the next Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA).

Until his appointment, Mr. Gatete was the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Rwanda to the United Nations in New York. A seasoned economist, he brings to the position extensive strategic leadership expertise, coupled with international experience in the political and financial landscape of the African continent. Mr. Gatete has served in senior government positions, notably as Minister of Infrastructure (2018-2022) and Minister of Finance and Economic Planning (2013-2018).
He has also served as Governor (2011-2013) and Deputy Governor (2009-2011) of the National Bank of Rwanda, Rwanda’s Central Bank, and Secretary General and Secretary to the Treasury at the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning in Rwanda (2003-2005). He was Director General for Economic and Social Affairs in the Office of the President of Rwanda (2000-2003), during which time, he served as the President’s Representative to the New Partnership for Africa’s Development and Coordinator of the National African Peer Review Mechanism.

Mr. Gatete began his diplomatic career in 2005 and was based in London until 2009 as Rwanda’s Ambassador to the United Kingdom, Ireland and Iceland. Prior to this, he served as National Economist of the United Nations Development Programme in Kigali (1998-2000) and Economist of Agriculture and Agri-Food and of Statistics Canada, in Ottawa, Canada (1993-1997).

Mr. Gatete holds a Bachelor’s and a Master’s degree in agricultural economics from the University of British Columbia in Canada. He is fluent in English with working knowledge of French.

Mr. Antonio Pedro congratulates Mr. Gatete on his appointment as Executive Secretary of ECA, and takes the opportunity to thank the UN Secretary-General for entrusting him to lead the organization as acting Executive Secretary for the past year.

Mr. Pedro also expresses his appreciation to the entire staff for their continued support and dedication to the work of ECA and invites everyone to join him in welcoming the new Executive Secretary.
2023 MID-YEAR ACCOUNTABILITY REVIEW: ECA’S PATH TO IMPACTFUL TRANSFORMATION AND GROWTH

The 2023 mid-year Accountability Programme Performance Review Meeting zeroed in on ECA’s “progress and opportunities for optimal results”.

Kicking off the meeting, former Acting Executive Secretary Mr. Antonio Pedro emphasized the three strategic tracks: reinforcing macroeconomic policy and sustainable financing, advancing the implementation of AfCFTA, and addressing climate resilience and green and blue economies. He reminded colleagues that these tracks aimed to refocus the Commission’s efforts on transformative and high-impact areas for member states’ socio-economic development. Pedro highlighted industrialization and economic diversification as key enablers for economic growth, inclusive development, and addressing issues like poverty and youth unemployment.

Mr. Pedro stressed the cross-cutting importance of digital transformation, data, technology, and innovation. He urged ECA staff to double their efforts, achieve 100 per cent performance, and maintain the Commission’s relevance in Africa’s growth and development. He called for unified vision and research focus among the three strategic tracks and the inclusion of theoretical analysis to strengthen ECA’s impact.

Director of SPORD, Mr. Said Adejumobi, reported a robust 63% achievement against performance indicators, surpassing the 50% midyear target, signalling a successful corporate program performance. He highlighted impactful interventions, including high-level policy dialogues and capacity-building initiatives, reinforcing member states’ development goals. Challenges such as resource constraints and lengthy recruitment processes were acknowledged. Emphasizing a shift towards qualitative reporting, Adejumobi called for gender-disaggregated data development in the 2024 planning cycle. He stressed adherence to reporting timelines and a focus on results over processes.

The Deputy Executive Secretary (Programme), Ms. Hanan Morsy, offered closing remarks for the recent APPRM session, lauding significant improvements in the efficiency and focus of discussions compared to previous sessions. She also commended the strategic use of detailed action points, which proved effective in tracking follows from previous meetings and improving the performance of SPs.
The APPRM
At ECA, quality assurance is a collaborative effort involving every part of the house. While the Quality Assurance (QA) unit at SPORD manages QA processes such as the reviews for flagship reports, the substantive divisions also have an important role to play. Katharina Goetze from SPORD spoke to Francis Ikome, Chief of the Regional Integration Section at RITD to hear about his perspective on quality assurance.

**SPORD:** Thank you for joining me today, Francis. You have previously been involved in Quality Assurance processes at ECA. Can you tell me about your experience with this?

**Francis Ikome:** I believe quality assurance is a critical function for any institution that aims to maintain high standards, especially for a think tank like ECA. It ensures that the products meet the highest quality.

**SPORD:** I agree. So, from your perspective as someone in a substantive division, how do you view the role of quality assurance?

**Francis Ikome:** From our perspective, we aim to involve the quality assurance unit and the Strategic Planning Division more closely in the production of knowledge products. It should be an ongoing process, starting from the conceptualization and continuing until the end of the product.

**SPORD:** I see. It sounds like collaboration is essential. What strengths and weaknesses have you observed in the quality assurance process?

**Francis Ikome:** When subject matter experts are involved, the process results in better quality products. However, if not properly managed, it can become an exercise in grandstanding, focusing on form rather than content. Additionally, reviewers need to have substantive knowledge to provide constructive input.

**SPORD:** That’s an interesting point. How can we ensure the process is properly managed?

**Francis Ikome:** To improve the process, it’s crucial that the quality assurance unit knows the major knowledge products produced in the house, their timelines, and is involved from conceptualization to dissemination. There should be ongoing communication between substantive divisions and the quality assurance unit.

**SPORD:** Thank you for your insights. How can we encourage colleagues to take the quality assurance process more seriously?

**Francis Ikome:** Sensitization and awareness are key. Colleagues should understand the importance of quality assurance and how it benefits both the institution and themselves. There should be buy-in and ownership of knowledge products by the entire organization.

**SPORD:** Absolutely. How do you see the role of quality assurance at ECA in the future?

**Francis Ikome:** The role of quality assurance needs to be strengthened in terms of resources, both material and financial. It should also be better known within the organization, with producing units actively seeking its services.

**SPORD:** Thank you for sharing your thoughts.
FACT CHECK: QUALITY ASSURANCE AT ECA

Why is quality assurance a key function for ECA?

Quality assurance is a vital function for ECA as a leading think tank on the African continent and beyond. It is guided by the ECA quality assurance policy, which defines the means by which ECA can verify that its knowledge products and services are sound, relevant, tailored, timely, accessible, and influential to ensure that they are indeed fit-for-purpose and of high quality.

How is the quality assurance function implemented in ECA?

ECA’s quality assurance system adopts a dual approach which involves continuous internal and periodic external assessments of all products and services. The first approach (Track 1) covers systematic self-assessments by ECA Divisions, its five sub-regional offices (SROs), and the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP) based on the ECA’s quality objectives with associated quality assessment criteria. The second approach (Track 2) involves quality reviews of ECA strategic products and services undertaken by Quality Assurance Panels to enhance learning and continuous improvement.

What are the quality objectives of ECA?

ECA’s five quality objectives include (i) degree of alignment with ECA’s five strategic directions; (ii) level of innovative thinking introduced in developing the product; (iii) contribution to agenda setting; (iv) support to global, continental, and regional development agendas; and (v) credibility of supporting data and information used. Under each quality objective, there is a set of associated assessment criteria that will be used to undertake quality reviews of ECA products and services. Furthermore, the aims of the quality reviews are to assess the conformity of products against quality criteria documented in the product description or concept note; involve key interested parties in checking the product’s quality and in promoting wider acceptance of the product; and provide confirmation that the product is complete and ready for approval.

What are the ECA products and services that are subject to quality review?

All major ECA publications approved by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) or its designated body for inclusion in ECA’s annual Catalogue of Publications such as the Economic Report on Africa, Assessing Regional Integration in Africa, and the African Economic Governance Report, among others, must go through mandatory and rigorous quality control and assurance processes.

What does the quality assurance process involve?

An important aspect of the quality review process will be to ensure that all the required steps are followed and that the right people undertake the different reviews, using the appropriate procedures and tools provided by the Quality Assurance Unit that will participate in undertaking the reviews and coordinate all the quality assurance activities. The quality control and assurance processes must observe the necessary steps starting from the choice of the theme, endorsement of the Concept Note, external review of the Concept Note, internal and external peer review of the draft report, and finally the approval process.

For further information, contact ECA-SPORD-QAU@un.org.
AFRICA RCP 2023 ANNUAL RETREAT SETS AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND COLLABORATION

The Africa Regional Collaborative Platform (RCP) convened its annual retreat in Nairobi under the theme of “Galvanizing Africa RCP Regional Assets for SDGs and Agenda 2063 Implementation” from 7 to 8 September 2023. The gathering provided a platform for reflecting on the global challenges, opportunities, and ways to advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Key outcomes and directives from the retreat included a focus on principles, such as the emphasis on the “opportunity” lens which remains vital, allowing the Africa RCP to drive development-accelerating initiatives amid global crises. It was highlighted further that the agency of the African Union and member states is paramount, with the UN offering support for Africa’s sustainable development, and that a people-centred approach will guide investments, ensuring the inclusion of women, youth, and children’s voices. Collaboration remains central to Africa RCP’s mission, focusing on coalitions and mission-oriented collaboration.

High-impact areas of focus for the coming year include policy advice and technical support for carbon markets to aid climate action in Africa, and support for COP 28. Education, the theme of the African Union for 2024, also comes into focus, with collaboration with the African Union Commission and a multi-faceted approach.

The African Knowledge Management Hub (AKMH) was launched to consolidate regional expertise. Entities are encouraged to populate AKMH rosters of expertise and utilize the platform regularly.

Another area of focus remains on supporting Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams, aligning with country priorities and identifying areas where RCP support can have the greatest impact.

Finally, the “college to college” initiative provides an opportunity for strategic engagement between the African Union Commission and UN entities.
In an effort to support the streamlining of ECA programme and project management activities, SPORD is set to roll out the updated ECA Programme and Project Management Manual. The manual which provides a holistic view of the programme cycle – from programming to conceptualizing, analysis, formulation, implementation to close-out – is informed by the need for a strengthened approach to the management of programmes and projects in ECA.

The manual aims at systematically aligning processes, systems, behaviours and practices at ECA with the standards and principles of results-based management at the United Nations as a whole. This effort is undertaken in line with General Assembly resolution 75/233 of 30 December 2020, on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, in which the General Assembly underscored the importance of results-based management, within and across entities and at all levels of the United Nations development system, recognizing it as critical for accountability and key to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and targets.

Thus, the manual is part of a process to enhance the contribution of ECA to inclusive and sustainable economic and social development in support of Africa’s accelerated structural transformation in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union.

The Programme and Project Management manual is not a standalone initiative but rather part of a larger change-management process to professionalize programme management at ECA. One critical component of that process is building the capacity of ECA staff in results-based management. In that regard SPORD has been carrying out staff training workshops in results-based management. In January 2023, a full-fledged in-person results-based management training workshop was conducted for forty staff, comprising Section Chiefs, Programme Management Officers, and Programme Management Assistants, representing all divisions, SROs and IDEP. Participants expressed positive feedback on the practical and hands-on approach of the training, with over 80 per cent of them expressing confidence that the training had equipped them with the needed knowledge and skills to apply results-based management to their work. The workshop highlighted new ways for the institutionalization of programme management and enhanced results-based thinking and practice in ECA in 2023 and beyond.

The institutional changes being supported by the manual and accompanied by capacity building initiatives will strengthen ECA effectiveness in sharpening its strategic focus and aligning programmes and projects with resources. It will promote efficiency through a coherent, coordinated, and integrated approach to programme management. Most importantly, it will also enhance the Commission’s organizational culture of learning and accountability through the consistent application of standards and principles for results-based management of programmes and projects.

**Be on the lookout for the Programme and Project management Manual and the upcoming training on Results Based Management! For any queries, please contact the SPORD/Corporate Policy and Planning Section team (eca-spord-cpps@un.org).**
ECA FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME WELCOMES FOURTH COHORT FOR A JOURNEY OF DEVELOPMENT

The ECA Fellowship Programme marked a significant milestone as it ushered in its fourth cohort comprising 20 young African professionals. Selected from an impressive pool of 4000 applicants, these Fellows exhibit exceptional potential and a strong commitment to their continent’s development. The rigorous yet impartial selection process ensured that each subprogram, including the Sub-Regional Offices (SROs) and the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP), would benefit from their unique contributions.

The induction programme for the fourth cohort of the ECA Fellowship Programme took place on 22 and 23 August 2023, marking the beginning of their transformative journey. During this hybrid-format event, organized by the Strategic Planning, Oversight and Results Division (SPORD), the Senior Leadership Team engaged with the Fellows, providing valuable insights into the key pillars of the commission’s work and its contributions to the continent’s progress.

Since its inception in 2017, the ECA Fellowship Programme has consistently played a crucial role in fostering the growth of young professionals while making significant contributions to policy implementation and development across member states. With the first three cohorts already leaving their mark, the fourth cohort is poised to build upon this legacy and contribute their own unique imprint on Africa’s growth story.

The diversity of the 2023 cohort is both inspiring and promising. Hailing from 17 different African countries, namely Benin, Cameroon, Cote D’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, these Fellows collectively represent the rich tapestry of Africa’s cultures, languages, and perspectives. Such diversity is an invaluable asset, as it brings together a multitude of experiences that can generate holistic and innovative solutions to the continent’s challenges and contribute actively to the ECA’s mission of fostering African development.

Senior Leadership team expressed to the fellows that as they delve into research, and collaborate within their divisions, they are embarking on a transformative journey that holds the potential to shape the continent’s future for the better. The role they will undertake is vital as they are set to become integral part of ECA, contributing their unique insights and energy to ongoing projects and initiatives. As the fellowship programme places a strong emphasis on research each Fellow will delve into their chosen area of expertise, producing peer-reviewed research papers that will be considered for publication in the special editions of the ECA’s Journal of African Transformation.
INTRODUCING THE FELLOWS HOUSED AT SPORD

Nancy Muthoni Githaiga, PhD, is a lecturer in Public Administration at Murang’a University of Technology, Kenya. She is an expert in China-Africa politics, regional integration, and public policy analysis. She has published and presented extensively on topics such as Africa’s connectivity through the Belt and Road Initiative, governance, and public administration. She is also a passionate advocate for positive change, promoting research-driven policy decisions, sound governance, and meaningful community engagement as drivers of transformation and development. (SPORD Fellow)

Yacouba Coulibaly is an economist with expertise in natural resources, resource-backed loans, climate change, environmental policy, digital financial services, tax policy, economic growth, and development financing. He is a PhD candidate in development economics at the Orleans Economics Laboratory, France, in collaboration with the University of Clermont Ferrand. He holds a master’s degree in development economics from the University of Clermont Ferrand-CERDI, France. He has worked as a research consultant at UNU-WIDER, where he analysed the macroeconomic impacts of climate change on public spending efficiency in South Africa. (Fellow supporting tracks 3 and 2 of ECA’s school of thought and practice).

Queen Esther Oye is an Economics Lecturer and Researcher at Covenant University, Nigeria. She earned her PhD in Economics from the same institution, where she developed expertise in political economy, macroeconomic policy, and dynamic general equilibrium modelling. She has published several academic papers in reputable journals and conferences, both locally and internationally. She is passionate about lifelong learning and using research to make a positive difference in her society and nation. (Fellow supporting tracks 1 and 2 of ECA’s School of thought and practice).

Career coaching for ECA Fellows enters second round

In a bid to bolster the career development and overall well-being of ECA Research Fellows, SPORD in 2022 launched a Career Coaching programme for all ECA Fellows currently working with ECA across the continent. Following the success of the pilot in 2022-2023, the programme is now entering its second round.

Former ECA Fellows who participated in the coaching program praised its effectiveness in providing clarity and confidence for their career paths. Feedback included expressions like “I enjoyed all the sessions,” “I was able to think through what exactly I need to do to achieve my career aspirations,” and “The coaching stimulated self-reflection and self-awareness, boosting my confidence for future tasks and professional growth.”

The one-on-one coaching sessions have been tailored towards further enhancing the Fellowship programme, ensuring that Fellows can maximize their time with ECA and receive support as they transition to the next phase of their careers. The coaching sessions are led by SPORD staff member and certified Systemic Business and Personal Coach Kat Goetze.

Each year, ECA invites applications from qualified young African Professionals to the “ECA Fellowships for Young African Professionals” programme. The programme aims to provide practical, on-the-job experience to the Fellows as they prepare either for a career in research and international development or the public sector. Currently there are 20 Fellows working with ECA across the continent.

Special thanks to Ms. Katharina Goetze of SPORD who offered to provide the coaching services to the fellows.
ADDIS-BASED FELLOWS ATTEND A MINI-WRITING RETREAT, AKA “SHUT UP AND WRITE”

This year the Fellowship was for the first time complemented by a new “Shut Up & Write” initiative to support the Fellows in their academic writing. It follows the internationally renowned Shut Up & Write format, which is a tried and tested method for getting academics and other writers to forge ahead with their work more efficiently, while at the same time providing a space for exchanges on the writing process with peers.

“Those were the most productive 45 minutes I have had in a long time”, said one of the Fellows who participated in the quiet writing sessions. Another one commented: “It was good to have this space away from distractions. I came up with new ideas about my research that I hadn’t thought about before.”
SPORD @ JOINT SESSION OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE OF SENIOR OFFICIALS AND EXPERTS - OFFICES FOR EASTERN & CENTRAL AFRICA

SPORD participated in the Joint ICSOE of East and Central Sub regions of ECA that took place from 26 to 29 September 2023 at the Club du Lac Tanganyika in Bujumbura, Burundi. The ICSOE took place under the theme “Establishing Central and Eastern Africa as sources of quality products and investments destination of choice, to accelerate industrialization and economic diversification, and to strengthen food security”. The ICSOE, was attended by about 210 participants from member States, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs), the UN system, private sector, civil society, academia, development partners and the media served by the ECA Sub-Regional Offices for Central and Eastern Africa. Among other things, the joint ICSOE helped SPORD to identify emerging development and strategic issues of relevance and implications they might have for the work of the two Sub-Regional Offices. This will aid programming and strategic focusing of the work of the Commission. SPORD in addition drew lessons leaned on the conduct of the newly introduced approach to ICSOEs in order to inform strategic guidance on the joint nature of ICSOEs which are important bodies of ECA’s Intergovernmental structure (IGS).

Details of the event can be found here: https://www.uneca.org/eca-events/ea-icsoe27
2024 and 2025 Results-focused planning for an impactful ECA

The fourth quarter of the year marks the beginning of preparations for 2024 Annual Business Plan (ABP) and the 2025 Programme Plan and Budget. This process builds upon the lessons learned and achievements of 2023, which have significantly contributed to enhancing programme performance.

Guided by the medium-term programme framework (MTPF), the General Assembly-approved 2024 Programme Plan and budget, and new legislative mandates from intergovernmental bodies on emerging issues, the 2024 Annual Business Plan (ABP) will be formulated. The 2025 Programme Plan and Budget will be prepared in line with the approach initiated in 2019 and endorsed by the General Assembly in December 2022, following a successful three-year trial period. ECA’s three Strategic Tracks namely macroeconomic and social policies for sustainable transitions; sustainable industrialization, trade, and economic diversification; and climate action and energy transitions will in addition inform the 2024 Annual Business Plans and 2025 Programme Plan and Budget.

The SPORD/Corporate Policy and Planning team is available to provide the necessary support and guidance as you embark on formulating the 2024 ABP and the 2025 Programme Plan and Budget. Divisions are strongly encouraged to facilitate division-wide and /or team-level reflections, as appropriate, and engage in joint planning for enhanced and impactful programme delivery. Detailed guidelines for preparing both the ABP and the PPB will be shared shortly. For more information, please contact the SPORD/Corporate Policy and Planning Section team (eca-spord-cpps@un.org).

In 2023 we have welcomed Yesuf Awel, Peter Mundala Okitatete, Haile Mulualem and the ECA Fellows Nancy Muthoni Githaiga, Yacouba Coulibaly and Queen Esther Oye to SPORD.

We congratulate Inam Ullah on his lateral move from the Monitoring, Reporting and Evaluation Section to the Quality Assurance Team of SPORD.

And we say farewell and thank you to our former SPORD colleagues Mercy Wambui, Asmara Lua Achcar, Deqa Musa, Brucktayet Woldemariame and Meseret Arega.
Knowledge-Sharing:

Take a moment to catch up with the ECA Journal of African Transformation - Reflections on Policy and Practice

Download the Journal of Africa’s Transformation

https://repository.uneca.org/handle/10855/49326

Key ECA Events:

African Economic Conference 2023
Imperatives for sustainable industrial development in Africa
16 - 18 November, 2023
Addis Ababa / Hybrid
https://www.uneca.org/eca-events/aec2023

2023 Conference on Land Policy in Africa
Promoting Sustainable Land Governance in Africa for Accelerated Implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area
21 - 24 November, 2023
Africa Union Headquarters, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
https://www.uneca.org/eca-events/2023-conference-land-policy-africa

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For queries or inputs, send an email to: eca-spord-ood@un.org

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