Enhancing Collaboration with RCs/UNCTs and Promoting Institutional Coherence in Country level Support by ECA

A strategic approach

Joining hands to deliver the SDGs in

August 2023
Addis Ababa
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1. **Brief Overview and Focus of the Strategic Document**

The UN reforms at the regional and country levels were to create better coherence and coordination through vertical and horizontal integration in ensuring enhanced delivery and accelerated process of realising the SDGs, and in the case of Africa, in sync with Agenda 2063. The realization of the SDGs is off-track in many regions of the World due mainly to the devastating effects of COVID 19 and as such, rescuing the SDGs is a major priority for all UN agencies especially the Regional Commissions. Rescuing the SDGs and Agenda 2063 in Africa will require scaling-up support to the RCs/UNCTs and a better internal coordinated approach in working with RCs/UNCTs and in support to member States. Currently, all parts of ECA work with RCs/UNCTs and provide technical advisory support to member-States, but largely not well coordinated with no monitoring, and reporting mechanism. Hence, there is no systematic documentation or reporting of ECA’s intervention and support at the country level. This is a major gap that this strategic document seeks to fill.

The strategic document focuses on three major objectives.

1. How to enhance collaboration by ECA with RCs/UNCTs especially as Regional Commissions are being called to demonstrate their value proposition at the country level and promote vertical integration of the UN reforms connecting the regional and country levels.

2. How to ensure better institutional coherence, coordination and internal monitoring and reporting of the work being done by ECA at the country level including support to RCs/UNCTs and direct response to requests from member-States.

3. Profile the institutional offer/menu of services that ECA provides which RCs/UNCTs, and member-States can tap into.

This strategic document provides ways and means by which the above objectives will be achieved.
2. Background: UN Reforms and vertical integration of regional and country levels

On 31 May 2018, the General Assembly unanimously adopted the resolution “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”. It contains measures to enhance the capacity of the United Nations Development System (UNDS) to better support countries in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) and provides guidance to the Secretary-General and the UNDS on their implementation. Compared to past reform efforts, this reform also benefits from strong leadership and unanimous support from Member States.

Key elements of the UNDS Reform are summarised as below:

- A new generation of UN Country Teams (UNCTs) and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (“Cooperation Framework”)
- A reinvigorated Resident Coordinators (RCs) system with enhanced capacity, leadership, accountability, and impartiality.
- A revamped UNDS regional approach to better support work on the field.
- Enhanced transparency and accountability of system-wide results and stronger capacities for system-wide evaluations.
- A system-wide approach to partnerships for the 2030 and 2063 Agenda.

Importantly, the reform ensures to provide more adequate support infrastructure at global, regional, and country levels to support the Resident Coordinators and UNCTs, and to improve the functions and capacities of the Resident Coordinator offices.

UN General Assembly resolution 72/279 elevates the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework as “the most important instrument for planning and implementation of the UN development activities at country level in support of the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda)“.

As such, the Cooperation Frameworks reflect the full UN development system (UNDS) footprint at global, regional, and local level, representing the UN’s collective offer to support countries in addressing key Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) priorities and gaps. It also reflects the relationship between Governments and the UNDS in collaborating to achieve the SDGs. It
articulates government expectations of the UNDS. It represents the UNDS’s collective offer to support countries. It serves as a core accountability tool between the UN Country Team (UNCT) and the host Government, as well as between and among UNCT members for collectively owned development results. It is supported by mandatory independent, high-quality evaluation and management responses. United Nations entity-specific country programmes are derived from the Cooperation Framework. Enhanced leadership, authority, and impartiality of the Resident Coordinator (RC) system is at the core of the new arrangements established as part of the reforms. RCs report directly to the Deputy Secretary General in a system managed by the Development Coordination Office (DCO). RCs with delegated authority provides them with crucial flexibility and ensures the system remains field-focused and able to adapt to quickly changing country needs.

The reinvigorated RC system supported by a re-profiled regional approach is at the core of the UNDS reform. Realigning UN regional assets to better support the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at country level is a key driver of the repositioning of the UN development system. The rationale is clear: the heightened demands of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development require better organized, optimally deployed and more collaborative regional UN structures. Coupled with more open and participatory intergovernmental processes, these will ensure that countries can fully benefit from the large pool of expertise, data and statistics and knowledge resources that sit in regional hubs.

COVID-19 triggered the deepest economic recession in nearly a century and the impacts on Africa have been particularly stark. Food insecurity and debt has been rising, and hard-won development gains have been lost. As the COVID-19 recovery ensues in Africa, the situation remains fluid and rapidly evolving, with measures needed to ensure the trajectory of the recovery remains on track. Climate change, increased debt obligations and the Ukraine – Russia War have exacerbated the situation. African countries have also committed to implementing the African Union Agenda 2063 which represents the continent’s blueprint and master plan for building a more prosperous continent. Achieving the SDGs by 2030 requires redirecting investments towards the Goals and implementing integrated solutions at scale by all stakeholders at all levels, working together with a renewed sense of urgency towards greater ambitions. At the country level, the RC system is responsible for coordinating the UN system to deliver better results in response to national needs and priorities. Revamped UN regional structures are aimed at achieving better knowledge sharing, data accessibility, policy engagement and integrated support to the UNCT and countries toward the realization of SDGs and Agenda 2063. The Development Coordination Office for the Africa Region also provides substantive guidance and support to the Resident Coordinator system.

The reform offers an opportunity for regional entities such as ECA to recalibrate and strengthen their cooperation and collaboration at the regional, sub-regional and country levels and in many cases, support the RCs/UNCTs as non-resident (NR) entity. Many entities now operate as full-fledged members of the UNCT without a physical office on the ground based on multi-country modalities or out of regional headquarters. Technology tools and the presence of a Resident Coordinator Office hosting several specialized profiles allows for NR entities to maintain continuous cooperation with national stakeholders via their presence in UNCTs and early engagement in the Cooperation Framework cycle. The CF now guides the entire programme cycle, driving planning, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation of collective UN support for achieving the 2030 Agenda. The UNCT engages in designing the UN Common Country Analysis (UN CCA), which underpins the Cooperation Framework, shifts from a one-off event to a “real-time” core analytical function. It is intended to be more agile
and reflective of evolving country contexts. It is fully UN-owned, and the initial document is revised annually. The guidelines ensure that the new generation of CCA responds to the urgency of the 2030 Agenda by delivering integrated, forward-looking, and evidence-based joint analysis. It displays a shared vision of the UNCT with a heightened focus on risk and foresight analysis, data-driven and build an evidence-base, which maps out expertise and resources for specific thematic work over the five-year implementation (or as decided) of the Cooperation Framework.

Challenges and opportunities identified in the CCA are then translated into a Cooperation Framework agreed with government. This requires the UNCT, government and other stakeholders to make deliberate choices and zoom in on the areas with the greatest potential for transformative and inclusive development and speak to the comparative advantage of the UN development system. This prioritization exercise applies a Theory of Change approach and reflects the value proposition of the UN development system in relation to all other development actors. The UN’s contribution to agreed priorities are subsequently translated into the Results Framework. United Nations entity-specific country programmes are subsequently derived from the Cooperation Framework.

The configuration of UNCT capacities is a new step introduced in the 2019 Cooperation Framework Guidance. It addresses the importance of ensuring that available UNCT capacities must respond to the agreed priorities of the Cooperation Framework and needs of the present country context, rather than automatically renewing previous or existing UNCT arrangements. The UNCT configuration exercise should be done in conjunction with the Management and Accountability Framework (MAF), which includes provisions on the definition and membership of a UNCT. The MAF states that UNCT member entities are those that carry out operational activities for development in support of countries, irrespective of where the UN entity is physically located, including entities with a project presence and, as such, all are required to sign the Cooperation Framework.
It is therefore of importance for any United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) member, to which ECA belongs, to engage as early as the CCA exercise is undertaken with a view to ultimately partake in the design of the areas of intervention for the next five years, which will be entrusted to the signatories of the Cooperation Framework. Currently, ECA – through its divisions at Headquarters in Addis Ababa, the five sub-regional offices and its training institute in Dakar – is already working with the RC system across the continent on various strategic initiatives, however there is a need for ECA to contribute towards RCs/UNCTs better in a coherent and harmonized way and in supporting national governments in its areas of expertise.

As a Regional Commission ECA has several ongoing streams of engagement that can benefit the country level as stated in the Management and Accountability Framework (MAF).

1. Through the UN Regional Collaborative Platform (RCP) at the operational level, which fosters collaboration on sustainable development across UN development system entities operating at the regional level ensuring that the collective efforts of the UN are coordinated and aligned to support countries meet the goals of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. In doing so, it supports Issue-based Coalitions (OIBC) that are demand-driven and respond to the specific needs and priorities of region or to the demand of the respective United Nations country teams.

2. Through the Regional Peer Support Groups (PSG) at the planning level, as one of the many regional UNSDG entities. The PSG, primarily functions as a strategic planning expert team that brings an integrated, system-wide rather than “agency-specific” support to the CCA/Cooperation Framework processes occurring at country level in respective regions. It also flags needs and opportunities for additional technical support to the RCP. Its 3 key responsibilities are:

   - Provide strategic planning support to CCA/Cooperation Framework cycle to increase likelihood of high-quality roadmap, CCA and cooperation frameworks.
   - Review of drafts of UNCT Roadmap, CCA and Cooperation Framework products to provide advice for increasing their quality.
   - Promote regional level experience exchange on good practice and examples in advancing the 2030 Agenda through the Cooperation Framework

Membership in the PSG implies readiness by all entities to review any of the above documents by any UNCT presented for quality assurance.

3. As an entity operating directly at country level, whether physically present or not in the country, as a member of the United Nations Country team and as a signatory of the Cooperation Framework allowing for the implementation of operational activities over the next CF cycle (usually 5 years). This includes:

   - Direct engagement in the development of CF mandatory corporate products (CCA, CFs etc.)
   - Engagement in quasi-mandatory development efforts: UPRs, VNRs, national implementation of global agendas etc.
- Analytical and programmatic interventions: research and advocacy pieces, programmatic support, either bilaterally or via joint programmes.

4. And not provided for in the MAF is the direct request from member-states for technical advisory support through government ministries, departments, agencies, and political leaders which ECA must respond to.

The purpose of this strategy is to ensure enhanced collaboration with RCs/UNCTs and member-states through an internal integrated and well-coordinated system by ECA which will require practical guidance via Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

3. ECA’s value proposition

The regional reform was meant to clarify and make more effective the value proposition of the regional dimension of the UN development system (UNDS), and in particular of, the regional commissions, in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the AU’s Agenda 2063. ECA, as part of the regional architecture, offers a strategic link bridging global guidance and policy with country-level action. It also provides multi-stakeholder and intergovernmental platforms¹ for substantive and multidisciplinary debates on the SDGs and means of implementation. ECA also offers unique integrated platforms that provide visibility to cross-border and transboundary issues, mobilising other region-based entities such as the African Union and its regional economic communities (RECs) for accelerated action toward achieving the SDGs and Agenda 2063. Its advocacy work builds common positions at the regional level for the provision of regional public goods as well as for brokering with global partners.

a. ECA’s core functions, strategic focus, and programmatic clusters

ECA as a regional knowledge policy institution supports the socio-economic development of Africa and discharges its mandate through three major channels- analytical policy research (it’s think tank role), convening function, capacity development and technical advisory services. The RCs/UNCTs and member-states can benefit from these streams of ECA’s work. This is shown diagrammatically below.

**Think-tank function**
- ECA conducts cutting-edge multi-sectoral policy research and analysis on key development priorities of the Continent to help African governments have a better understanding of development challenges and opportunities. ECA promotes peer learning and innovative thinking for evidence-based policy making and infusing new knowledge to countries and institutions.

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**Convening function**

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¹ In the Africa region, regional inter-governmental and multi-stakeholder platforms, such as the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (ARFSD), the ECA Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, the Intergovernmental Committees of Senior Officials and Experts of the five sub-regions, have become key events for coordinated policy response and peer learning, dialogue on gaps and barriers for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and for strengthening integration between the three dimensions of development.
Through its convening function, ECA facilitates regional intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder platforms for debating, discussing, and initiating concrete Africa-driven strategies for Africa’s development. The platforms offer opportunities to exchange experiences promoting peer learning on the implementation, follow up and review of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 and to build common positions to drive SDG implementation (See footnote 2). It also allows to tailor global agenda to the need of the continent and give an Africa-specific lens.

**Operational function**

Through its operational function ECA provides policy advice and technical support to countries and the RCs/UNCTs in formulating and implementing innovative sustainable solutions in areas related to its normative and analytical work at the country level. It also provides tailored capacity development programmes at regional, sub-regional and country levels through the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning. ECA also responds to the requests for technical support from member-states, regional institutions like the AU and the RECs and other key stakeholders including the private sector and knowledge centers and institutions.

*Figure 1 - ECA’s three core functions*

To deliver on its overall objective of promoting inclusive and sustainable development of Africa, ECA concentrates on five strategic directions to guide its work (see Figure 2):

*Figure 2 - ECA’s five strategic directions*

To realize its overall objective, the Commission has its Programme of Work organized around nine interdependent programmatic clusters (see Figure 3) that are delivered through six Divisions based in its headquarters, five sub-regional offices (SROs) covering the five sub-regions of the continent and the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP) based in Dakar.

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To better streamline its work and focus, ECA informed by its strategic areas of work has zeroed in on three strategic tracks in accelerating structural transformation and economic development in Africa. This is depicted below:

The Three Tracks

**TRACK 1: STRENGTHENING MACROECONOMIC POLICY INCLUDING ISSUES OF SUSTAINABLE FINANCING, DEBT MANAGEMENT, AND INTERFACE WITH GOVERNANCE ISSUES**

**TRACK 2: BOOSTING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AfCFTA, SUSTAINABLE INDUSTRIALIZATION AND ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION, JOB CREATION & POVERTY REDUCTION**

**TRACK 3: ENHANCING RESILIENCE THROUGH CLIMATE ACTION, ENERGY JUST TRANSITION, GREEN AND BLUE ECONOMY, AND DATA, DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION**

*Figure 3 - ECA programme clusters*
4. Objectives of the strategic approach and expected outcomes.

The strategic approach aims to provide direction and focus to ECA cooperation and collaboration with the RC system and member states. With a view to strengthening tailored and value-adding support to country-level UN action and thereby accelerating SDG implementation and promote internal cohesion in the work of ECA. The Commission’s approach also aims to guide the renewed working relationship with RCs in line with the spirit and intent of the reform, which is making the UN development system fit-for-purpose and well-positioned to deliver the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

At the heart of this strategic approach is the ECA’s “Menu of Services” to UNCTs covering a broad array of cross-sectoral analytical, advisory, and capacity development services that can be tapped to deepen support to countries to achieve the SDGs. Complementing ECA’s Menu of Services is the “Countries of Focus” approach of targeting a specific number of countries over a period (3 years) to receive a critical mass of ECA investment for greater impact, policy influence and visibility, RC systems in the selected countries will be especially considered for the pilot and initial phases of the rollout of this strategy.

The strategy will serve as a framework for realizing the objectives and expected outcomes from the six prioritised and the three strategic tracks and promote mutually reinforcing pillars of cooperation and collaboration with RCs/UNCTs and member-states as defined below.

4.1 Overall objective

To achieve accelerated and effective implementation of the agenda 2030 and 2063 for Sustainable development at country level through improved ECA engagement with UNCTs and RCs and member-states promote internal coherence in the work of ECA in supporting the RCs/UNCTS and member-states.

4.2 Specific objectives

Under the overall objective, the approach has three specific objectives:

4.2.1 Enhance ECA’s engagement with the RCs/UNCTs (working in collaboration with DCO Regional Office for Africa2) in supporting countries in their trajectory towards the achievements of Agenda 2030 and 2063; develop guidelines or SOPs mapping roles within ECA and critical path towards engagement;

4.2.2 implement joined-up transformative and catalytic interventions leveraging stronger linkages between regional, sub-regional and national dimensions, and maximizing the impact of collective UN country level action, with a measure of ECA’s own contribution;

4.2.3 Promote a systematic process of internal coordination in ECA that allows for monitoring, reporting and evaluation of ECA’s country level support.

4.3 Expected Outcomes

2 DCO Regional Office for Africa provides strategic guidance and support to resident coordinators and UN country teams in the Africa region, in addition to daily backstopping to resident coordinator offices on the ground, to ensure quality and timely support to countries in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It also provides managerial and oversight functions for resident coordinators.
The outcomes expected from successful implementation of the strategic approach are:

4.3.1 Early engagement of ECA in the Cooperation Framework cycle, to contribute to priority setting resulting in cycle-long engagement.

4.3.1 Multidimensional policy analysis and subsequent demand-driven advisory support and tailored training programmes effectively delivered to the country in cooperation with the UNCT and in line with priorities and needs articulated in Cooperation Frameworks (CFs).

4.3.2 Regional and sub-regional priority setting grounded in and well informed by country perspectives through engagement of RCs in policy discourses at ECA-convened intergovernmental platforms.

4.3.3 Regional, transboundary and cross-border initial and recurrent analysis as well as related initiatives implemented in a coherent and coordinated manner at country level for better impact and visibility.

4.3.4 Increased availability and accessibility of credible and comparable country-level data and statistics for follow up and review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

4.3.5 Improved co-creation, dissemination and uptake of knowledge resources and innovations to support and inform regional and country level work; and

4.3.6 Internal coherence and coordination of ECA’s work at the country level with adequate monitoring and reporting.
5. ECA “Menu of Services” to Member States and United Nations Country Teams/RC System

To provide coherent and multidimensional support to Member States and United Nations Country Teams, ECA has developed a “Menu of Services” organising its offers around eight cross-sectoral service lines (see Figure 5) covering a broad range of services in thematic areas where ECA has comparative advantages. The “Menu of Services” forms the basis for DCO Regional Offices and RCs across the continent to identify and request the required ECA services based on regional or country initiatives and/or needs. As is common in UNCT meetings, where entities present their mandate and work with other members of the team, to ensure coordination and synergy, a presentation package should be developed, regularly updated, and shared with the RC, the Head of Office and the Economist embedded in the RCO. The reinvigorated RC system provided RCs and UNCTs with an
office staffed with five core functions, much of whom are well positioned to leverage the comparative advantage of entities including ECA separately, or jointly.

**ECA Menu of Services**

ECA’s menu of services can be availed to the RCs/UNCTs in several stages including the development of cooperation frameworks cycles. It covers several areas including analytical thought leadership, the implementation of technical assistance, capacity development and programmatic interventions.

Subsequent prioritization efforts among issues listed and those agreed upon with Government will then lead to the choice of a set number of intervention areas over the CF cycle, which will then feature in joint workplans served by specific areas of intervention, programmatic or normative, of which some are listed below.

In addition, ECA is well positioned to address emerging issues such as global and regional agenda (food systems, education, AfCTA, climate change etc.)

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1) A strategic planner and Head of Office, 2) an economist, 3) a data management and results reporting officer, 4) a communications and advocacy officer and a 5) partnerships and development finance officer, forming the new backbone supporting the UN Resident Coordinator and the UN country team. This strengthened Office of the UN Resident Coordinator came out of a strong belief that every office needs a minimum set of skills, capacities and competencies to support UN country teams in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda irrespective of the country profile: complex country, a middle-income country, a landlocked country or a small island developing state.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Service line</th>
<th>Specific areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Macro-economic policy, integrated development planning and sustainable public financing including institutional development and governance issues</td>
<td>Macroeconomic policies, development planning, Integrated Planning and Reporting System, macro-modelling, domestic resource mobilisation, illicit financial flows, reform of the global financial architecture, innovative financing models, and public financial policies. Also, the strengthening of the institutional and governance capacity of countries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Data, statistics, and digital transformation</td>
<td>Censuses and surveys, strengthening capacity of national statistical systems, production and use of geospatial data, civil registration and vital statistics, digital identity/ ID, environmental statistics; demographic and social statistics; agricultural and rural statistics; and gender statistics, and digital technology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Trade (AfCFTA), economic diversification, industrialization and regional integration</td>
<td>Trade modelling, trade policy analysis, development, and implementation of national African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) strategies, AfCFTA Country Business Index, review of investment policies and regulatory frameworks, review of countries’ competitiveness, and industrial policies and industrial zones, value addition and enhancing free movement for regional integration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Private sector development, innovative private finance &amp; infrastructure development</td>
<td>Development of capital markets, private sector development, women’s land tenure security and entrepreneurship, enabling environment for business in agriculture, energy transition and development, road safety and transport infrastructure, support for PIDA projects, public-private partnerships to catalyse innovative financing, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Poverty, gender, and social policy</td>
<td>Development of social policy for poverty reduction and inclusive growth, Gender equality and the empowerment of women and formulation of national women’s economic empowerment strategies, monitoring of social investments, t, migration, urbanization policies etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Climate resilience, and blue economy</td>
<td>Climate adaption, mitigation, and climate financing, debt for nature swap, carbon markets, Great Blue Wall, development of blue economy resources, blue economy toolkits and many more.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Training and Capacity development</td>
<td>Training and capacity development for government officials in all areas of public life including macro-economic policy, social policy and poverty reduction, climate change etc. This is done through IDEP- the training arm of ECA based in Dakar, Senegal.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8 Integrated delivery of services through ECA Sub-Regional Offices in their respective areas of specialization

ECA sub-regional offices work toward becoming a Centre of Excellence in their specialization areas which include: i) Sub-Regional Office for North Africa: Employment skills and balanced development; ii) Sub-Regional Office for West Africa: Demographic dynamics for development; Sub-Regional Office for East Africa: Deepening regional integration – towards the implementation of AfCFTA; Sub-Regional Office for Central Africa: Economic diversification policy and reforms; and Sub-Regional Office for Southern Africa: Inclusive industrialization (including poverty reduction and inequality).

6. Channels/ Areas of collaboration with RCs/UNCTs

a. Multidimensional and integrated policy support

a) Support to the development of CCAs and the UNSDCFs; and the implementation of the latter

The Cooperation Framework as the main planning and implementation framework at the country level and the Common Country Analysis underpinning it are critical entry points for all country-level interventions by resident and non-resident UN entities, including ECA. In the preparation of the CCAs/CFs, ECA will support the formulation process (and also through Africa RCP) drawing on its analytical and normative work, particularly in the areas of macroeconomic policy frameworks, data and statistics and regional, transboundary and cross-border issues impacting on countries’ development. ECA’s role will involve undertaking analysis of progress, gaps, opportunities, and bottlenecks against a country’s commitment to achieving the 2030 Agenda. ECA, as a non-resident entity can take part in the exercise with an equal footing as other physically present UN entities, in its Countries of Focus and, as applicable, will avail funding for implementation of the relevant components of the CF - be they implemented individually or jointly with other UN agencies.

As a member of the Regional Peer Support Group (PSG) mechanism chaired by the DCO Regional Director, ECA will continue to support the development and review of foresight analysis, transformational maps, roadmaps, CCAs and CFs, including quality assurance and other technical support to country programming, a role distinct from the above engagement provided directly at country-level.

UNCT and ECA’s cooperation in country level programming and implementation is expected to result in improved integration and evidence-based analysis of regional, transboundary and cross border issues in CCAs and Cooperation Frameworks paving the way for accelerated attainment of the SDGs.

b) Technical and advisory services

Drawing on the skills of the staff of the policy research divisions across the Commission, the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP) and the ECA subregional offices, advisory services will be provided, upon request by RCs, on behalf of Governments in the ECA’s thematic areas of competence as outlined in the Menu of services (see Section 5) and equally in the Cooperation Framework
areas of intervention. Advisory services are structured into three phases. In the pre-deployment phase, advisory teams develop a work plan, conduct a country analysis and formulate a strategy for the provision of advisory services. The deployment phase entails conducting scoping and technical missions and providing tailored technical assistance. Lastly, in the post-deployment phase, the advisory services support the monitoring and evaluation of the policy recommendations implemented, and technical assistance provided to countries, including through the RC system. Throughout this process, emphasis will be laid on national ownership, accountability, inclusiveness, coordination within UNCT working groups to avoid redundancy and display a cooperative and flexible approach, to achieve effective and efficient development outcomes. Where relevant, ECA can also contribute surge capacity to respond to urgent requests from RCs on issues compounding member States’ development.

b. SDG data & statistics

Considering the centrality of an integrated and comprehensive data ecosystem in supporting effective implementation of Agenda 2030 and 2063, ECA will work with UNCTs and Governments, National Statistics Office (NSOs) and other stakeholders to develop strategies to generate, validate and disseminate accessible, comparable, and interoperable and quality data. The strategic approach also aims at improving the use of data by countries for evidence-based decision-making.

ECA, in collaboration with other UN regional entities, RCOs and UNCTs, will strive to support the delivery of a One-UN National Statistical Capacity Programme⁴ for all African countries for the development of strong and well governed statistical systems. ECA will also collaborate with RCs on flagship initiatives that contribute to improving the availability and accessibility of country-level SDG data, including the Agenda 2030/Agenda 2063 Data Gateway and the rollout of the Integrated Planning and Reporting Toolkit (IPRT).

ECA’s and RCs/UNCTs cooperation in this area is expected to result in increased accessibility and availability of credible country level SDG data and statistics which will be effectively used by countries to set priorities, make informed choices, and implement better policies for sustainable development.

c. ECA engagement and participation in UN Country Teams as a non-resident agency through its Sub-Regional Offices

UN Country Teams are the main mechanism for inter-agency coordination and decision-making at country level. Led by the RC, and support by a fully staffed RCO, strong of several expert profiles, they bring together heads of all UN entities that are physically present in the country as well as those contributing remotely as non-resident entities. UNCTs provide space for dialogue, country-level coordination, and collaboration responsible for

⁴ The One-UN Statistical Capacity Programme is a flagship initiative of the Opportunity/Issues based Coalition I (OIBC I) working on strengthened integrated data and statistical systems for sustainable development. The OIBC is co-convened by UNFPA and ECA and has 15 participating members comprising of FAO, ILO, IOM, OCHA, OHCHR, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNDRR, UNESCO, UN-HABITAT, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNWOMEN, WFP and WHO.
preparing Cooperation Frameworks together with national governments and with other relevant stakeholders guided by UN Common Country Analysis (CCA), a UN system’s independent, impartial, collective assessment and analysis.

In addition to its headquarters based in Addis Ababa, ECA has a network of five Sub-Regional Offices (SROs) covering the five subregions of the continent. The SROs will continue to actively participate in the work of UNCTs where they are located, namely Rabat (Morocco), Niamey (Niger), Yaounde (Cameroon), Kigali (Rwanda) and Lusaka (Zambia). The SROs will be responsible to represent ECA in the respective UNCTs and, as appropriate, integrate ECA’s work in Cooperation Frameworks. The SROs will also serve as the first port of call for RCs and UNCTs to liaise and coordinate with ECA in their respective sub-regions.

ECA’s cooperation in this area is expected to result in well-coordinated and coherent delivery of ECA’s in-country development interventions, effective participation in decision-making at the country level and value adding support to the implementation of CFs.

d. Resident Coordinators participation in ECA-convened intergovernmental meetings and platforms

Leveraging its strength of convening a wide range of stakeholders on Africa’s development priorities, ECA will further deepen substantive engagement and participation of RCs in the planning, organisation and delivery of its intergovernmental meetings and regional platforms. Key platforms for regional policy articulation that ECA convenes include:

- Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (ARFSD);
- ECA Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development;
- Intergovernmental Committees of Senior Officials and Experts of the five subregions;
- Conference on Climate Change and Development in Africa;
- Statistical Commission for Africa; and
- Other sectoral policy organs.

These intergovernmental platforms provide space for senior policymakers to exchange knowledge and best practices, follow-up, and review of progress on the 2030 Agenda and the AU’s Agenda 2063 and analyse existing and emerging challenges. To enhance closer cooperation and collaboration, ECA in collaboration with the DCO Regional Office will continue to engage RCs to actively participate in steering committees, preparation of joint conference papers, moderator/speaking roles, mobilisation and capacity support to Major Groups and other Stakeholders (MGoS) in ARFSD host countries and organising side-events, and jointly following up on the implementation of outcomes and recommendations arising from these meetings and conferences.

Participation in ECA-convened conferences is expected to result in improved knowledge exchange, networking, and policy engagement opportunities for RCs at the regional level which will subsequently inform regional and country level priority-setting and accelerated achievement of the SDGs.
e. Joint events, activities, and programmes

Joint events, activities, or programmes on mutually agreed issues such as COVID-19, AfCFTA, financing etc. will be organised either directly with RCs and/or DCO Regional Office for Africa for mutual benefits. The joint activities will, amongst others, provide space for deliberations on the outcomes of major ECA normative and analytical work, including from the annual editions of its flagship publications such as the Economic Report on Africa, Assessing regional integration in Africa, the African Governance Report etc. The joint events will also provide a space to deliberate on coordination and country-level implementation of strategic regional and sub-regional initiatives. The joint events will focus on exchanging views and experiences on regional, sub-regional and country responses and interlinkages. Similar to the global network of economists, RCs It may be useful to consider organizing a bi-annual meeting between IDEP’s network of economists and the Economists of in the RCOs. The monthly platform organised by DCO to stimulate dialogue between the Regional Directors of UN entities and RCs can also be used to exchange on regional and country perspectives on key priorities.

DCO Regional Office and ECA will also jointly follow-up on implementation of outcomes and recommendations emanating from such joint events, activities, and programmes.

ECA’s cooperation in this area is expected to result in improved dissemination and uptake of knowledge resources and innovations to support and inform country level work and engagement.

f. Training and capacity development services

The development process in Africa is driven by overarching frameworks of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, SDGs (Agenda 2030) and Agenda 2063 of the Africa Union. Both Agendas clearly single out the role that human and institutional capacity development must play in the attainment of their respective development goals and the sustainability of their achievements. It requires changes and adjustments in the way African countries conduct their development. The world is changing; Africa must change, with an urgent need for the structural transformation of African economies and institutions to ensure that progress is sustained. This transformation largely depends on a continuous investment in strengthening of the capacity of all development actors.

Based on needs identified requests and/or mutual dialogue, ECA could offer training to government officials and other national stakeholders (via tailored online and onsite courses) and to RCs and staff of the RCOs. The African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP), as the training arm of ECA, delivers tailored training programmes addressing national priorities on all the ECA service lines.

a. Peer-learning group on economic issues

ECA will facilitate the participation of the economists embedded in RCOs in the peer-learning group on economic issues in Africa. The peer-learning group will bring member-states together to share experiences, knowledge, practices, and innovations on economic issues in Africa. The peer-learning group emanated from a decision of the ECA Conference of Ministers of Finance, Economic Planning and Development in March 2023 in which ECA was called upon to establish a peer-learning group in facilitating more informed policy making and decisions on
economic issues in Africa through knowledge and experience sharing and expert advice from institutions like ECA to the group.

7. ECA “Country of Focus” approach to programme delivery

ECA adopted a “Country of Focus’ (CoF) approach in mid-2019 to ensure a more coherent, focused, and impactful delivery of its services to a select group of initial twenty-one African countries. The rationale is to create a critical mass of investment in niche areas in these CoFs through a clustered approach whereby ECA Divisions and Sub-Regional Offices plan and deliver together. The approach is also aimed at improving programmatic interlinkages and optimal use of limited resources for more impactful contributions to national and regional priorities.

Based on prioritization considerations, twenty-one countries were selected from the five subregions as CoFs for 2020 to 2021 (see below). This requires being updated:

The expected outcomes of ECA’s CoF approach include integrated and coherent approach to programming and delivery; cost and operational efficiency; improved delivery of policy and capacity support to countries; and greater visibility, impact and policy influence.

The CoF approach dis-incentivises siloed and fragmented approach and provide effective and integrated support to RCs. The approach, however, does not intend to exclude countries not included in the CoFs but it prioritises and targets its programme interventions in its Countries of Focus. The list of CoFs is periodically reviewed and updated as necessary. The overall approach is not static.

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5 DRC appears as CoF for both Sub-regional Offices for Eastern and Central Africa. The two Offices will develop on a common strategy/ joint Integrated Country Plan Support.
either but is subject to periodic reviews to incorporate feedback and lessons learned during implementation.

In collaboration with RCs, particularly for the development of CCAs/CFs, the ECA CoFs will be given priority. The CoF approach will not limit ECA from flexibly responding to requests received from RCs and member-states outside of its CoFs. Based on requests for long-term support as per the ECA menu of services, an Integrated Country Support Plan (ICSP) may be jointly developed with RCs. The Plan will contain a results framework for delivering a package of ECA policy and capacity support and will be appropriately mainstreamed in ECA’s annual programme plan.

8. Ensuring effective internal ECA coherence and coordination in supporting the RCs/UNCTs and member states

From an internal point of view, and given the scale of the organization, coherence in the work of ECA in supporting RCs/UNCTs and member-states will be essential to 1) ensure harmonization in the quality of support and level of effort provided, 2) coordination among offices and divisions to create synergies and avoid gaps or duplication and 3) a coherent information and reporting system providing a one-stop overview of all the effort delivered at country level, which would reinforce points 1) and 2).

Given that engagement at country level occurs either by SROs via direct participation in UNCTs or at the direct request of member-states, which reach out to either SROs, HQ Technical division or IDEP, a multi-pronged approach will be needed.

A single online repository or database of all requests for technical support from the RCs/UNCTs and directly member-states sent to divisions/SROs/IDEP, or the OES will be created. This would allow for effective tracking of requests and updating them in ensuring that those requests are attended to. This would also assist in the planning process for the use of RPTC resources. A major observation made by the OIOS in the recent evaluation of RPTC in ECA is the lack of a repository for all requests for technical support from member-states and the RCs/UNCTs. This would address this challenge and make the reporting of country level support by ECA easier.

In addition, an online portal is to be created that gives a comprehensive view of all the on-going technical support of ECA to member STATES and the RCs/UNCTs. The information will include nature of the project being undertaken, the division/SRO involved, the focal person for the project, the status of implementation and the results achieved. This portal will be developed together with the IT section and would be accessible to all staff of ECA and classified according to countries and regions. With time, the goal will be to make the portal accessible to designated senior officials of government like Ministers who can immediately view/review the projects being undertaken by ECA in their respective countries, and the status of implementation. The RCs, and the leadership of the UN in NY can also be given access to the portal. This ‘one-stop online information source’ will make it possible for ECA to track its on-going work at the country level, the progress made, and ensure effective monitoring and reporting of country level engagements.

However, developing and maintaining the portal will require the discipline and commitment of all ECA staff especially the senior leadership team (SLT). It would require that any staff member going on mission to provide technical support to a member-State or RC/UNCT will have to input a short information on the mission in the portal and do same after the mission. This will also be required for follow-up engagements on the technical
support. SPORD will work with the IT section in developing the portal. Each division will have to designate a focal point who will follow-up on this for the division.

A Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) that will accompany this strategic document will be developed, which would outline the nature of the ‘engagement tree’ on roles and responsibilities, and procedure on streamlining the internal coordination processes on working with RCs/UNCTs and ensuring that the portal function effectively well. This will include the role of Directors, the focal persons, SPORD, IT section and other related staff involved in the coordination process.

Establishing a one-stop information source will be key to ensuring better coordination and generation of data and information on the work being done at the country level, which key stakeholders including RCs, some selected Ministers in member-States and internal ECA staff can easily access. The database would include: the requesting Government party/Country’s CF intervention; the task and expected result; the coordinating FP (task lead); the lead division/other offices/divisions involved; resource allocation decisions; quarterly progress documented. Such a portal would 1) allow real-time monitoring for quality and timeliness of services, 2) coordination and synergy with other internal actors, 3) on the spot snapshot presentation of country level engagement or end-of-year annual report preparation of ECA’s work at the country level.

9. Guiding principles

In implementing this strategy, the importance of active and visible leadership by ECA, RCs and DCO Regional Office for Africa cannot be overstated, with an overriding focus to support governments through RC/UNCTs in implementation of agreed CFs and responding to ad hoc requests for technical support by member-States. The below principles will serve to not only guide the partnership and collaboration among the various stakeholders but also govern the overall execution of the strategy to deliver the intended results.

Joint ownership: Contributing to impactful delivery of the SDGs at country level is a key driver that the UN development system collectively rallies behind. In this spirit, the responsibilities for executing this strategy are jointly owned by all staff of ECA especially the Directors and in close partnership with DCO and the RCs/UNCTs.

Coherence: Internal coherence is central to ensuring the implementation of this strategic document, which ECA staff will need to promote. Furthermore, it would be important that ECA, DCO and RCs continually establish appropriate synergies, agree on shared objectives, and foster mutual support in achieving agreed outcomes. They will use every opportunity to jointly pursue appropriate integration of, and alignment with, national, sub-regional and regional priorities and initiatives. This would require a level of coherence with the work being done within the context of the Africa RCP.

Inclusivity: ECA will ensure that in the implementation of this strategic document, it works closely in an inclusive way not only internally but also with key partners, namely the RCs and DCO. For example, ECA will systematically inform RCs of its in-country development activities ahead of on-the-ground delivery. It will also undertake to work closely with RCs in planning and delivering these interventions as well as in making
sure that RCs take part in the intergovernmental platforms it convenes and are involved in its regional and sub-regional initiatives. In areas where ECA can add value, RCs will engage the Commission and jointly explore the most optimal ways to collaborate. In addition, ECA will ensure effective participation of economists embedded in RCOs in relevant ECA Peer Learning Groups on Economic Issues.

**Symmetrical information sharing:** In the interest of effective collaboration, all stakeholders (including the key partners - DCO and the RCs) will ensure exchange of relevant information on matters of mutual interest and pertaining to their respective spheres of competence if deemed to benefit the interlinkages between country and regional level work.

**Accountability and Reporting:** A process of accountability and reporting of ECA’s country level engagement will be undertaken by SPORD but with the active participation and collaboration of all internal stakeholders and staff of ECA. Furthermore, ECA will work closely with the DCO, RCs/UNCTs and member-states in ensuring the effective implementation of this strategic document and in preparing an annual report.

10. **Partnerships and coordination in operationalizing the strategic approach**

At the regional level, ECA will work closely with DCO-Africa in planning its support to the RCs/UNCTs, aligning it with the work being done at the level of Africa RCP and ensuring effective internal cohesion and coherence in ECA in working with RCs/UNCTs and member-states. ECA will interface with DCO in this collaboration through its Strategic Planning, Oversight and Reporting Division (SPORD) serving as the coordination hub for ECA support to the Resident Coordinator system. However, at the sub-regional and country level, the SROs will facilitate the engagement with the RCs, but working in a coherent way with the regional level interface and coordinating its work with SPORD. ECA headquarters and Sub-Regional Offices work hand in hand to ensure coherent and systematic yet decentralised approach of operation that makes for synergy, better monitoring and reporting of delivery.

A bi-annual ECA, DCO-Africa and RCs meeting is proposed (including one during the annual ECA Expo) in which collaboration issues, areas of engagement and interventions planned for the upcoming year will be discussed and agreed upon. Also, the meeting will serve as a platform to review progress made, and achievements recorded over the previous year, lessons learned and areas of improvements. During the meeting, ECA will present its key knowledge products, cross border and transboundary issues, trends, and big-ticket items necessary for Africa’s socio-economic development. Also, the RCs will in turn present, in a selective way, their country specificities, which should stimulate an interactive discourse on sub-regional and country level policy and operational issues. The meeting will agree on areas of future collaboration based on the needs and requests of the RCs, which should then serve as the basis for a joint programme that will be monitored and subsequently reported upon. Relevant aspects of the programme will be mainstreamed into ECA’s programme of work.

ECA represented by SPORD, and DCO-Africa will work closely in the coordination process in ensuring the smooth operation of the collaboration. The strategic partnership with the African Union and the Regional
Economic Communities (RECs) will have a key role to a harmonized and coherent response to national, sub-regional and regional policy initiatives.

11. Next steps would therefore include:

1. Discussing/endorsing the current strategy at SLT level with guidance on how to develop the subsequent Standard operating procedures (SOPs) for operationalization.
2. Organizing an internal dialogue/meeting/workshop with SPs to present the strategic approach on promoting internal coherence and coordination in working with RCs/UNCTs and member-States and to elicit inputs in the preparation of SOPs.
3. Create a single online repository/database of all requests for technical assistance from RCs/UNCTs, DCO-Africa on behalf of the RCs/UNCTs, and member-States through divisions/SROs/IDEP and ensuring appropriate tracking/update of those requests.
4. Organizing quarterly meetings with DCO to engage RCs, in which ECA provides briefs on its key service offers and key activities that ECA could support them on.
5. Following the development of SOPs, develop with the IT section, an internal portal that will capture all ECA's work at country level.

12. Risks and mitigation measures

Major risks that may jeopardize the approach’s successful implementation are detailed along with risk treatment plans in the table below.

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<th>Risks</th>
<th>Mitigation measures</th>
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| a) Low commitment from top management | • Engage senior management of ECA and have consultation with DCO and RCOs in the finalization of the strategic approach to get their buy-in for its operationalization.  
• Organize a launch event to officially kick off the implementation phase of the new approach.  
• Identify champion RCs to work closely with ECA and DCO to advocate for new ways of working and effective collaboration.  
• Document and disseminate, via periodic newsletters, stories showcasing effective ECA-RCs collaboration/ best practices |
| b) Failure to operationalize the new business model by ECA, RCs/UNCTs in collaboration with DCO/ status quo maintained. | • Periodic joint reviews of progress (working with DCO and RCs) to set priorities, share information and review progress.  
• Mainstream activities planned with RCs in ECA’s programme plan and periodic monitoring during quarterly Accountability and Programme Performance Review (APPR) Meetings  
• Link internal resource allocation decisions to track record of working with and through RCs/UNCTs |
c) Limited financial resources to implement the strategic approach.

- Strengthen joint resource mobilization efforts and provide dedicated funding through RB to the implementation of the strategic document.
- Put in place mechanisms such as cost sharing and pooled funding to finance joint programmes and activities.

13. Accounting for results: monitoring, evaluation and reporting

Monitoring of ECA engagement and collaboration with RCs will be done continuously at the level of Divisions and Sub-Regional Offices with guidance and backstopping support from the System-wide Coherence Unit and the Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Section of SPORD/ECA. Periodic programme progress reporting will be undertaken during the Accountability and Programme Performance Review meetings (APPRM). Mid-year and year-end reports will highlight progress of implementation, lessons learned, bottlenecks and concrete solutions to ensure achievement of outcomes. Regular progress updates on strategic initiatives will be provided, as and when needed, to the ECA Senior Leadership Team.

An annual report on the country level support by ECA will be prepared which will feed into the Report of the SG on Regional Cooperation and the Report of the Chair of the UN Sustainable Development Group on the Resident Coordinator System. The implementation of the strategic approach will be evaluated initially by end of 2025.

14. Communication and advocacy

ECA will seek to popularise this strategic document by sharing it with other Regional Commissions, DCO and RCs on the efforts being made by ECA to strengthen its working relationship at the country level through working with RCs/UNCTs and the member-States. The popularisation will include organizing joint events and activities and providing technical support within the framework of the document. Furthermore, the annual Resident Coordinators’ Global Retreat could provide a platform to share good experiences and promote learning across regions with the engagement with ECA as case-study Success stories will also be featured during key global, regional, sub-regional and country level events to secure the support of key constituencies and to sustaining political and financial commitment to such collaborations. In addition, the annual system-wide regional report of the UNDS will be used to feature success stories that can be replicated elsewhere.

15. Funding

Setting aside a portion of existing funds and/or mobilizing the right type and level of resources is key for effectively implementing ECA’s collaborative approach of working with RCs and member-States. For services requested by RCs through DCO as per the Menu of Services, including tailored training programmes, project plans including cost estimates will be jointly drawn up by the three parties to serve as the basis for operationalising the support. As appropriate, a cost sharing arrangement will be considered together with joint mobilisation of resources to tap on existing funding windows such as the Joint SDG Fund. In addition, ECA, DCO and RCs will explore funding modalities that could provide increased predictability and flexibility, including basket funds, to
ensure adequate resource flow for agreed upon initiatives. These efforts will target multilateral and bilateral development partners, private sector, and philanthropic foundations. In many cases, support may also be financed by the RCO based on its annual operating budget, or as a cost-sharing modality among entities.

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