



# Economic and Social Council

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## Committee for Programme and Coordination

### Fifty-ninth session

3–28 June 2019

Agenda item 7

### Adoption of the report of the Committee on its fifty-ninth session

## Draft report

*Rapporteur:* Mr. Jun Yamada (Japan)

### Addendum

## Programme questions: proposed programme budget for the year 2020

(Item 3 (a))

### Programme 15 Economic and social development in Africa

1. At its 12th meeting, on 11 June 2019, the Committee considered programme 15, Economic and social development in Africa, of the proposed programme plan for 2020 and programme performance information for 2018 ([A/74/6 \(Sect.18\)](#)). The Committee also had before it a note by the Secretariat on the review of the proposed programme plan by sectoral, functional and regional bodies ([E/AC.51/2019/CRP.1/Rev.2](#)).

2. The Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa and a representative of the Secretary-General introduced the programme and responded to queries raised during its consideration by the Committee.

### Discussion

3. Appreciation and support were expressed for the programme and the work carried out by the Commission. Some delegations noted the work done by the Commission to support countries in the follow-up and review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and welcomed in particular the nexus between the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want of the African Union.

4. A delegation highlighted the efforts of the Commission in providing support and technical assistance to promote economic growth and to build an environment for



investment in the region and encouraged the Commission to continue to promote technology and innovation for development in Africa. A delegation pointed out that the availability of uninterrupted Internet connectivity remained a challenge for the region and expressed the hope that the Commission would be working to address the problem.

5. A delegation drew attention to paragraph 18.19 and expressed appreciation for the Commission's intention to move its work beyond merely focusing on the public sector and to include the private sector, as well as its intention to provide support through its work on private sector financing. Another delegation, recognizing the importance of the Commission in promoting economic advancement and domestic market capacity-building in the African region, pointed out that other entities had more prominent roles for discussions on private sector financing and stressed that the Committee was not the forum for creating new mandates.

6. A delegation commented that the proposed programme plan for 2020 accurately reflected the good work carried out by the Commission, especially in diagnosing the economic challenges in Africa and in providing remedies. The same delegation noted that the subprogrammes were in line with his country's leadership vision for economic transformation that was knowledge-based, focused on the private sector and export-led. On the latter point, another delegation concurred that the focus on a private sector-led and export-led economy was the formula that had proven successful.

7. A delegation encouraged the Commission to give more prominence to South-South cooperation on the African continent and to play a matchmaker role in efforts to build governance capacity. The same delegation also encouraged the Commission to improve the dissemination of its publications, given that they currently did not have a broad reach and should be targeted not only to Governments but also to the private sector, academia and civil society. Another delegation noted that the Commission was a credible institution that had done a lot towards the achievement of sustainable development, by acting as a think tank and providing technical support to African countries and other institutions in the region, including the Economic Community of West African States and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development. The work of the Commission in promoting and investing in human capital, which was the continent's most important resource, was appreciated.

8. Some delegations expressed serious concerns about the illicit financial flows on the continent, which were likened to a "gangrene on our economies", and noted that invoicing errors deprived States of hard currency that could otherwise have been used to invest in infrastructure, thereby inhibiting improvements in the conditions of life in Africa and compromising prospects for attaining the Sustainable Development Goals. Clarification was sought as to how the Commission would address the issue of invoicing errors. Separately, a delegation noted the discrepancies in the total figures reported for illicit financial flows and sought clarification on the astronomical amounts cited by different sources, ranging from tens of billions of dollars to over \$150 billion annually. Delegations also noted that the African economy was still losing \$150 billion every year to the scourge of illicit financial flows, despite the efforts put forward to eliminate it. At a time when Africa was poised to build the largest free trade area in the world and to step up its trade with the rest of the world, the delegations expressed the hope that the Commission would provide support to the region in tackling the problem.

9. A delegation expressed concern that the programme narrative made no mention of the impact of the informal economy, which, the delegation stated, was very damaging to the economies of the countries in the region, as it harmed the diversification of resources. Further clarification was sought in that regard.

10. Regarding the overall orientation, several delegations expressed concern about the alignment of the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda with the objectives and the deliverables of the respective subprogrammes of the Commission. A delegation noted the planned alignment of the programme with the Charter of the United Nations, the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063 of the African Union and was of the view that the Organization should not link programmes to the Charter, since the Charter represented an overall vision for the Organization and was not a management tool. The delegation added that there could be a benefit in splitting the vision of the programme and the overall strategic orientation. In that regard, the delegation stressed the merits of clearly highlighting that Agenda 2063 was indeed the vision of the “future we want”, as expressed in the annex to General Assembly resolution 66/288. Another delegation sought clarification on the rationale behind the proposed alignments with the Sustainable Development Goals, echoing comments made in regard to other programme plans that the alignment was inconsistent and that, in its view, aligning the programme budget with the Goals was not an imperative. The delegation further observed that the alignment, as presented, limited what could be done under the programme and suggested that using the term “linkage” rather than “alignment” to describe the relationship between the Goals and the programme could solve the issue.

11. As noted in paragraph 18.18 (c) in the section on strategy and external factors for 2020, a delegation welcomed the Commission’s intention to design and implement innovative financing models for infrastructure, human, physical and social assets for a transforming Africa and sought more information on how that would be achieved.

12. A delegation drew attention to the findings of the evaluations, in particular paragraph 18.26 (c), on weaknesses identified in the Commission’s programme design, management, monitoring and reporting. Clarification was sought on how the Commission was addressing those weaknesses.

13. With regard to the format of the presentation of the proposed programme plan for 2020, and specifically subprogramme 1, Macroeconomic policy and governance, subprogramme 3, Private sector development and finance, subprogramme 4, Data and statistics, subprogramme 5, Climate change, environment and natural resources management, subprogramme 6, Gender equality and women’s empowerment and subprogramme 9, Poverty, inequality and social policy, it was noted that, for 2020, those subprogrammes all had different titles compared with the titles previously approved by the General Assembly for the period 2018–2019. In that connection, the delegation sought clarification as to whether there had been a substantive change in the mandates of those subprogrammes. Some delegations queried the placement of the programme performance information for 2018 in an annex, rather than being grouped together with the proposed programme plan for 2020, as seemed to be the case for other programme plans. A delegation was of the view that the presentation could be further reviewed.

14. A delegation noted that, in the past, the Committee would be provided with a conference room paper detailing the changes between the approved programme and the proposed programme plan and observed that that had not been the case for 2020, which made it more difficult to consider the programme.

15. With regard to subprogramme 1, Macroeconomic policy and governance, and in particular in connection with the additional support requested for Member States to further customize and adapt a prototype modelling framework as a tool to help African countries in their policy formulation and implementation processes, clarification was sought on how that support was being provided and on whether a mechanism was already in place or whether support was provided on the basis of requests received from countries.

16. Regarding subprogramme 2, Regional integration and trade, some delegations expressed reservations regarding the “challenge and response” section presented under the highlighted planned result for 2020, where it was stated that the “challenge” had been that, despite the existence of political will as evidenced by the signing and ratification of the Agreement establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, some Member States had requested further advice on how to fully benefit from the Free Trade Area. On that point, delegations observed that Member States requesting support on how to benefit from free trade was not a challenge, since it was the role of the Commission to provide support to Member States. Another delegation, noting the difficulties arising from the fact that paragraphs were not numbered, pointed to differences in the French translation vis-à-vis the English version, in which it was implied that Member States requesting support amounted to a challenge. The delegation noted that, in the French version, the message was completely different, as it referred to the Commission providing support to Member States so as to better leverage the benefits of signing the Agreement, and pointed out that there was no mention of a challenge. A delegation enquired about the definition of the term “challenge”, noting that, in several cases, a request for services was characterized as a challenge.

17. Concerning subprogramme 3, Private sector development and finance, several delegations stressed the importance of the African Continental Free Trade Area and commended the efforts of the Commission to address the issue in the different countries in the region. Furthermore, it appeared in the report and during discussions among delegations that many African countries still needed to be fully informed of the challenges and opportunities of the agreement that established the free trade area. In that connection, a delegation requested an update on the progress made towards the signing of the Agreement. A delegation enquired about regional review reports and sought clarification on whether agencies, funds and programmes were involved in the process.

18. Regarding subprogramme 4, Data and statistics, several delegations expressed support for the technical assistance and advisory services that would be provided to countries of the region and pleaded for more coverage, owing to the importance of statistics for planning purposes and to the fact that many countries were grappling with the problem of outdated statistics. Several delegations emphasized the need for the Commission to focus attention on data and statistics and on providing countries of the region with proper structural capacity in that area. A delegation, remarking that the term “challenge” seemed to have different meanings in different contexts, noted that, in the case of statistics, the need to deal with outdated statistics was indeed a serious challenge to be overcome. On developing data and statistics, a delegation noted that that was an area where regional commissions could add value.

19. With regard to subprogramme 5, Climate change, environment and natural resources management, a delegation enquired about the legislative mandates from United Nations bodies that supported activities relating to the strengthening of the blue economy. With reference to paragraph 18.63, the delegation sought clarification on the source of the funding cited in that paragraph for the field and technical cooperation project on blue economy governance and policy implementation and on whether that funding was based on voluntary contributions. Another delegation enquired about the role of international finance in the activities of the subprogramme.

20. Regarding subprogramme 6, Gender equality and women’s empowerment, a delegation noted that the work carried out by the Commission in advancing gender equality by developing programmes that promoted women and girls and youth was to be commended.

21. With regard to the format of subprogramme 7, Subregional activities for development, a delegation noted that, in component 1, Subregional activities in North Africa, women and youth in Africa featured prominently in the highlighted planned

result for 2020. The delegation observed, however, that there was no mention of an alignment with Sustainable Development Goal 5, on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls. Regarding component 2, Subregional activities in West Africa, under the same subprogramme, a delegation sought clarification on how the African continent should look at the issue of population and demographics, as well as the issues of gender disparity and hunger. The delegation raised a question about how the Commission interpreted the concept of historical demographics and whether there were other elements that needed to be taken into account to address the issues of gender disparity and hunger.

22. Furthermore, under subprogramme 7, component 3, Subregional activities in Central Africa, a delegation noted that the highlighted planned result for 2020 referred to increased economic diversification in Central Africa. Information on the alignment of the subprogramme with Sustainable Development Goal 17 (on strengthening the means of implementation and revitalizing the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development), however, was notably missing. The delegation remarked that inconsistencies in alignment with the Goals generated confusion and sought the views of the Commission on the rationale for the alignments.

23. Concerning subprogramme 9, Poverty, inequality and social policy, under the highlighted planned result for 2020, a delegation sought clarification on the use of the term “win-win”, specifically on the statement that making migration a “win-win” for all involved contributed to reducing poverty.

24. Despite the adoption of numerous resolutions and programmes focusing on youth by both the United Nations and the African Union, such as Security Council resolution [2250 \(2015\)](#), the African Youth Decade 2009–2018 and the African Union Youth Volunteer Corps, several delegations expressed their concern about the absence of a subprogramme dedicated explicitly to that subgroup. A delegation suggested that perhaps the programme should have a tenth subprogramme to deal with youth and employment, given that unemployment in that demographic was a growing trend in Africa that, the delegation opined, if left unaddressed, would become a demographic time bomb. In response to a comment from the Commission that the issue of youth was considered a cross-cutting topic, the same delegation opined that the issue of women was cross-cutting in nature and constituted a subprogramme by itself. In that regard, the delegation stated that if the cross-cutting issue of youth and employment was not considered a subprogramme, then, by the same logic, subprogramme 6 on gender equality and women’s empowerment should also not be considered separately.

25. A delegation welcomed the efforts of the Commission to assist African States in addressing climate change and recalled that States had already expressed the wish to draw up national plans for development on that aspect long before the Paris Agreement had been signed.

26. A question was raised concerning the expected cooperation and coherence between the Commission and its role vis-à-vis the new resident coordinator system, which went into effect in December 2018.

27. A delegation recognized the importance of effective monitoring and reporting on efficiency gains.

28. Some delegations commented that the expression of high expectations by some members of the Committee towards programmes, in particular as they related to the creation of new mandates, was not within the purview of the work of the Committee. Another delegation recalled that the role of the Committee was to accept, reject, curtail and/or reformulate programmes, especially if the programmes were not well elaborated.