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Statutory issues

Report on the activities of the Subregional Office for North Africa (October 2024–September 2025) and work programme for 2026

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A. 25-01023 (E)

I. Overview

1. In the present report, the activities of the Subregional Office for North Africa of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) from October 2024 to September 2025 are presented. In line with its annual business plan, the Subregional Office conducted policy studies, held capacity-building workshops, provided advisory services and convened high-level meetings in cooperation with African States, other divisions of ECA, the Arab Maghreb Union and other regional economic communities, other entities of the United Nations system and development partners.

2. The Subregional Office focused on four priorities:

(a) Small and medium-sized enterprises as engines of sustainable development;

(b) Leveraging of migrants' economic contributions to sustainable development;

(c) Domestic resource mobilization;

(d) Regional integration and economic diversification.

3. The Subregional Office also prepared a framework for post-conflict reconstruction in the Sudan and worked with partners on initiatives pertaining to climate finance, employment and debt sustainability.

II. Main achievements

A. Small and medium-sized enterprises as engines of sustainable development

4. The Subregional Office expanded its programme on small and medium-sized enterprises to include support to those that are led by women and are focused on sustainable development driven by the implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area. In Morocco, during the first phase of the programme, from 2023 to 2024, 350 women entrepreneurs attended capacity-building workshops in eight different cities, prompting the Agency for Investment and Export Development of Morocco to launch the Export Morocco Now initiative. In Mauritania, the Subregional Office worked with the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Development and the Ministry of Youth Empowerment, Employment, Sport and Civic Service to extend the programme to small and medium-sized enterprises led by young people. This engagement, alongside advocacy from United Nations entities and development partners, contributed to the adoption of the revised Investment Code (Act No. 006 of 19 February 2025). In Algeria, the Subregional Office worked with the Resident Coordinator Office on measures to improve access to finance for small and medium-sized enterprises. Lastly, a high-level dialogue, held in Rabat in October 2024, enabled policymakers from Libya, Mauritania and Morocco to exchange experiences and identify reforms that would benefit small and medium-sized enterprises.

5. The Subregional Office also produced a road map for the establishment of an integrated e-mobility regional value chain, which was shared with focal points in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Morocco and Zambia. Based on a forthcoming ECA study on e-mobility regional value chains linking the three countries, the road map includes details of how critical minerals

– cobalt and copper – produced in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Zambia feed into midstream and downstream activities in Morocco, such as battery production and automotive manufacturing. The road map is intended to facilitate the establishment of a complementary supply chain for African e-mobility within the framework of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, with goods being transported along the Lobito Corridor; the aim is to support green growth, job creation and inclusive industrialization.

6. In addition, the Subregional Office strengthened institutional and entrepreneurial capacity across North Africa. In Nouakchott in July 2025, 20 young entrepreneurs, including 12 women, received training on trade facilitation, digitalization, climate resilience and access to finance, following which an agreement was concluded with the Government of Mauritania to extend support for small and medium-sized enterprises into the period 2026–2029. In Libya and Tunisia, assessments were produced of knowledge gaps in the countries' small and medium-sized enterprises: 9 in Libya and 26 in Tunisia. The results of the assessments were used to establish tailored training programmes for enterprises in each country. Lastly, in Tunis in September 2025, a capacity-building workshop was held for representatives of small and medium-sized enterprises led by women in Libya and Tunisia. Collectively, these efforts strengthened competitiveness, resilience and sustainability capacity in more than 35 small and medium-sized enterprises and in several government institutions, across all three countries.

7. Furthermore, the Subregional Office worked on a series of policy studies as guidance for decision makers. A published report on environmental, social and governance frameworks included a call for stronger regulatory standards to boost the resilience of small and medium-sized enterprises.[1] In another published study, it was projected that a 1°C rise in average global temperatures could reduce the gross domestic product (GDP) per capita of North African countries by nearly 11 per cent, underscoring the need for modelling of the effects of climate change.[2] In a forthcoming report on the economic implications of water scarcity in North Africa, threats to food security, jobs and stability will be analysed, and water-efficient technologies, desalination and enhanced cooperation between North African States will be recommended. In another forthcoming report on the opportunities and challenges faced by small and medium-sized enterprises in North Africa, weak regulation, limited finance and low integration into regional and global value chains will be identified as critical constraints, while regulatory reforms, improved financing instruments and policies to boost cross-border trade and competitiveness will be proposed.

B. Leveraging of migrants' economic contributions to sustainable development

8. In June 2024, at an inception workshop in Accra, ECA launched a project on leveraging migrants' economic contributions to sustainable development in Africa in the Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Ghana, Lesotho and Tunisia. Grounded in South-South cooperation and funded from the Development Account (sixteenth tranche), the programme is aimed at building national capacity to mainstream migration issues into development planning and to mobilize remittances for sustainable growth. The Subregional Office provided advisory services and convened consultations among ministries, financial institutions, diaspora groups and United Nations system entities.

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[1] ECA, *Role of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises in Building Climate Resilience in North Africa: a Case for Fostering the Adoption of Sustainable Corporate Governance* (Addis Ababa, 2025).

[2] ECA, "Impact of climate change on Africa: urgent need to shift the economic paradigm" (Addis Ababa, 2025).

9. In November 2024, an advisory mission was conducted in Tunisia, followed by an inception workshop on the contribution of remittances to national development. Thereafter, a national technical working group was established, led by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Planning. The working group ensured that, for the first time, remittances would formally be recognized as a financing source in the country's national development plan for the period 2026–2030. The working group also approved a dedicated national policy on remittances from Tunisians living abroad, investment and contributions to financing for development policy.

10. The Subregional Office conducted a fact-finding mission in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, in January 2025, during which it engaged with the Government, financial institutions and United Nations entities. This was followed by a workshop, in which 45 people participated. In addition, a multisectoral national technical working group was established under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, African Integration and Ivorians Living Abroad.

11. In Lesotho in May 2025, the Subregional Offices for North and Southern Africa conducted a joint fact-finding mission with the country's Ministry of Finance, during which regulatory gaps, low financial literacy and weak data systems were identified as issues that the country faces. At a follow-up workshop, in which 55 people participated, the terms of reference of a national technical working group were set out and reform priorities were identified.

12. The Subregional Offices for Eastern and North Africa conducted an advisory and fact-finding mission in the Comoros in June 2025, involving meetings with representatives of ministries, the central bank, diaspora bodies and private companies. Subsequently, at a workshop in which 55 people participated, a national technical working group was established under the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Industry, Investment and Economic Integration and its terms of reference were approved.

13. In Ghana, the Subregional Offices for North and West Africa helped to ensure that remittances would be incorporated into the medium-term national development policy framework for the period 2026–2029. The two subregional offices helped to draft a narrative chapter of the national development policy framework document, in which the case for using remittances as an alternative source of development finance was set out, along with a matrix of policy reforms to be implemented from 2026 to 2029, aimed at increasing the economic contribution of the country's diaspora by channelling remittances into investment; the cross-sectoral planning group on migration for development approved both the narrative chapter and the policy matrix. In July 2025, a workshop for stakeholders from government agencies, development partners, private companies, civil society organizations and academic institutions was held in Accra, in a hybrid format with both in-person and online participation, at which a regulatory framework, institutional reforms and an action-oriented road map were approved.

14. To consolidate progress, ECA convened a workshop in Tunisia on 24 and 25 September 2025, under the theme "Remittances from Tunisians residing abroad, investments and contribution to financing development in Tunisia", in which representatives of several African States participated. A similar event is scheduled to be held in Accra on 18 and 19 November 2025, in order to enable the sharing of lessons and best practices in mainstreaming diaspora finance.

15. In Egypt, ECA is currently undertaking preparatory work for the provision of advisory services to help the Government to incorporate the issue of remittances into its review of the Vision of Egypt 2030 national strategy and to continue to implement policy reforms to enhance the effect of remittances on the country's development.

16. In order to ensure that capacity-building activities are evidence-based, to guarantee that policy recommendations can be directly incorporated into national strategies and to complement advisory services and institutional support, the Subregional Office produced policy briefs on:

(a) Remittances in North Africa,[3] in which it was shown that, with 25.6 million migrants living abroad, the countries of the subregion received $38 billion in remittances in 2023, accounting for 70 per cent of total external finance and surpassing both official development assistance and foreign direct investment, that remittances play a stabilizing role and that tailored measures are needed to channel them into productive investment;

(b) Demographic dividend and migration,[4] in which cross-sectoral recommendations in such policy areas as labour markets, education and health were set out and reforms to maximize the contribution of migration to the long-term development of Africa were proposed;

(c) Migration statistics and skills recognition,[5] in which the findings from a project funded from the Development Account were synthesized and measures were recommended to strengthen national migration data systems, establish mechanisms to verify and recognize migrant skills, and harmonize regional frameworks in line with international standards.

C. Domestic resource mobilization

1. Technical assistance programme on increasing tax revenues in North Africa

17. Under the programme, the Subregional Office supported the Governments of Egypt, Libya, Mauritania and the Sudan in strengthening their tax policies and the capabilities of their tax administrations. Through these initiatives, the Subregional Office helped to enhance domestic resource mobilization and strengthen fiscal resilience in North African States, thereby expanding the tax base of each country and freeing up fiscal space to support sustainable development.

18. In Cairo in October 2024, the Subregional Office worked with the tax authority of Egypt to deliver a comprehensive training programme on the taxation of State-owned enterprises. In addition, a total of over 85 officials received training at three complementary capacity-building workshops on the taxation of State-owned enterprises, held in Cairo in January, February and August 2025, on the subject of, respectively: the legal and technical foundations of tax audits of State-owned enterprises under the Investment Act (No. 72 of 2017), as amended by Act No. 160 of 2023, covering such subjects as the application of international financial reporting standards, governance principles and the tax implications of debt; sector-specific practices in the cement and food industries; and sector-specific compliance challenges in the shipping industry.

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[3] ECA, “Remittances: an important source of external finance in North Africa”, ECA Policy Brief, No. ECA/25/002 (Rabat, 2025).
[4] ECA, “Demographic dividend and migration in Africa: challenges and policy options”, ECA Policy Brief, No. ECA/25/003 (Rabat, 2025).
[5] ECA, “Migration in Africa: statistics and recognition of migrants’ skills”, ECA Policy Brief, No. ECA/24/002 (Rabat, 2024).

19. The Subregional Office worked closely with the tax authority of Mauritania to build institutional capacity. At a workshop held in Nouakchott in September 2024, 15 officials were trained on the application of international tax treaties, including the model double taxation conventions of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the United Nations; permanent establishment rules; and the avoidance of double taxation. Participants engaged in simulated treaty negotiations, putting into practice the skills acquired during the training. At a second workshop in Nouakchott, in February 2025, 17 officials were trained on transfer pricing skills. The training also covered the role of digitalization in reshaping tax rules, including those set out in the outcome statement on the two-pillar solution to address the tax challenges arising from the digitalization of the economy, which was issued jointly by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the Group of 20 and is aimed at combating tax avoidance, enhancing coherence in international tax rules and improving transparency. As a result of the two workshops, the Government of Mauritania is better able to identify profit shifting, improve compliance frameworks and safeguard national revenue.

20. In addition, the Subregional Office worked with the tax authority of Libya to support the modernization of the country’s tax system. At a capacity-building workshop held in Tunis in July 2025, officials of the authority were introduced to e-taxation principles, covering taxpayer registration, electronic filing, return processing and data analytics. The event was followed by a workshop on the taxation of e-commerce, which was held in Tunis in September 2025, at which 15 officials received training – partially drawn from lessons learned from the implementation of taxation reforms in Egypt – on the legal, procedural and technological aspects of taxing the digital economy. At the workshops, the way was paved for an e-taxation road map for Libya and the State’s capacity to regulate digital businesses and improve compliance was strengthened.

2. Enhancement of debt management in Africa

21. In Egypt, ECA supported the Ministry of Finance in modernizing the country’s debt framework by launching, in April 2025, an automated debt management performance measurement system that incorporated artificial intelligence to improve data entry, forecasting and sovereign risk analysis. Under this initiative, sustainable debt management and operational efficiency are being strengthened. Advisory services have helped with the drafting of the country’s forthcoming medium-term debt strategy, in which domestic and concessional financing are balanced, a target debt profile is set and an investor narrative is crafted. ECA also assisted a debt sustainability analysis task force of the International Monetary Fund in preparing the Government’s application to the latest sovereign risk and debt sustainability framework, while also helping the Ministry of Finance to structure the timeline and identify the main deliverables. In July 2025, at a four-day workshop held in Cairo, organized with the Ministry of Finance and Global Sovereign Advisory, an international firm dedicated to advising States and State-owned entities worldwide on strategic, economic and financial issues, 35 officials, including 23 women, were trained on the sovereign risk and debt sustainability framework. The course was intended to confer the skills needed for advanced analysis upon junior debt officers; its content included debt management theory, the chief drivers of debt dynamics and practical simulation techniques.

22. Representatives of the Subregional Offices for North and West Africa undertook a joint mission to Sierra Leone in March 2025 to assess the country’s national debt management framework and fiscal challenges. The team identified five priorities: developing the domestic debt market, expanding innovative and concessional financing, strengthening tax administration, increasing the revenue of State-owned enterprises and enhancing access to

concessional loans. With a view to expanding on these findings, a capacity-building workshop was held in Freetown in June 2025, at which 25 officials of the Ministry of Finance, the central bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Resident Coordinator Office were trained on the design of projects that comply with environmental, social and governance standards; concessional loan assessment; blended finance; the structuring of public-private partnerships; and debt-for-nature swaps. Following the training, the Government of Sierra Leone is better able to align its financial strategy with long-term debt sustainability.

23. At the regional level, in Nairobi in June 2025, the Subregional Office, Financial Sector Deepening Africa and the Children's Investment Fund Foundation jointly convened the Regional Forum on Innovative Green Finance. At the Forum, 27 senior officials from 12 African countries, including Egypt, Morocco and Sierra Leone, exchanged experiences on green bonds, sustainability-linked instruments and debt-for-development swaps. Participants also expressed interest in their States' possible membership of the Sustainable Debt Coalition and in the holding of regular forums to deepen regional cooperation on sustainable finance.

24. To complement this technical assistance, the Subregional Office published a series of analytical studies in 2025. In a policy brief on debt management and sustainable finance,[6] it highlighted the rising debt burden in North Africa, with the average debt-to-GDP ratio climbing from 79.7 per cent in 2019 to 88.4 per cent in 2023, and warned that high servicing costs, exchange rate volatility and the adverse effects of climate change could cut per capita GDP growth by up to 15 per cent per year. The policy brief also included recommendations to improve the performance of State-owned enterprises, expand local currency financing and diversify funding sources through concessional loans, blended finance and debt-for-climate swaps. In another study,[7] the Subregional Office analysed slow productivity growth in North Africa, arguing that policy and market distortions weakened total factor productivity and calling for transparent and inclusive policymaking, rigorous evaluation and stronger accountability to restore trust and enable structural transformation. In a study on climate change and GDP in Africa,[8] it was shown that, despite the continent's negligible share of global emissions, it faces severe climate vulnerability that is likely to reduce growth and tighten financing constraints, with the result that there is an urgent need to move towards a development model in which resilience, human welfare and green innovation are prioritized.

D. Regional integration and economic diversification

25. In December 2024, the Subregional Office advanced the second phase of an initiative to foster an e-mobility regional value chain involving the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Morocco and Zambia. At a capacity-building workshop in Lusaka, 82 participants – including policymakers and representatives of private companies and academic institutions from eight countries – designed a regional road map, implementation plan and partnership framework for developing e-mobility value chains within the African Continental Free Trade Area.

26. The Subregional Office remains committed to fostering the economic development of Libya. At a capacity-building workshop co-organized with Mohammed V University, held in Rabat in November 2024, trade and commerce officials from Libya learned how to identify value and supply chain development opportunities using the automotive and agricultural sectors of Morocco as case studies. In December, a capacity-building workshop on the development of

[6] ECA, "Debt management and sustainable finance in North Africa" (Rabat, 2025).
[7] ECA, "Accounting for slow productivity growth in North Africa: the role of policy distortions" (Rabat, 2025).
[8] ECA, "Impact of climate change on Africa".

value and supply chains was held in Rabat for seven officials of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Trade of Libya. They received training from representatives of academic institutions in Morocco, which included assistance with identifying national priorities for industrial modernization and cross-border integration. In June 2025, at a capacity-building workshop held in Tunis, officials and representatives of trade support institutions in Libya were trained on export diversification and policy tools to strengthen the role of such institutions in supporting exports from Libya, with a view to reducing dependence on oil. In July, another workshop was held in Tunis for representatives of private companies and officials of Libya, who received training on trade within the African Continental Free Trade Area and on promoting an enabling environment for non-oil sectors.

27. During the fourth quarter of 2024, the Subregional Office finalized the national strategy of Morocco for the implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area and the strategy for implementing the Agreement within the Arab Maghreb Union. Although approval of the strategy for the Union was deferred until the first quarter of 2025, with the completion of two such strategies in 2024, the Subregional Office exceeded its target for the year.

III. Special initiative and partnerships

A. Special initiative: planning of post-conflict reconstruction and development in the Sudan

28. In response to the urgent need for an evidence-based framework to guide the recovery of the Sudan, the Subregional Office produced a flagship report entitled *Planning Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development in the Sudan: Framework and Lessons from International Experiences*.[9] The report includes analysis of the country’s acute humanitarian, institutional and economic challenges, including mass displacement, governance breakdown and the collapse of basic services, along with lessons from international experiences of post-conflict recovery. In the report, emphasis is given to a phased and adaptive approach in which immediate needs, such as food security, health and education, are addressed and, simultaneously, the groundwork is laid for inclusive governance and long-term development.

B. Partnerships

1. Other divisions of the Economic Commission for Africa

29. **Joint events and policy dialogues**. The Subregional Office and the Climate Change, Food Security and Natural Resources Division jointly organized a webinar, held in October 2025, on the subject of climate finance and employment in Africa, at which climate finance and debt sustainability, including fundraising to offset climate-related GDP losses, were discussed.

30. **Debt and sustainable finance**. As detailed above, the Subregional Office for North Africa worked with its counterpart in West Africa to offer the Government of Sierra Leone support on debt management and on green and sustainable finance. In addition, the above-mentioned Regional Forum on Innovative Green Finance was organized in partnership with the Macroeconomic Policy, Finance and Governance Division and the Climate Change, Food Security and Natural Resources Division.

[9] ECA (forthcoming).

31. **Migration and remittances.** As mentioned above, the Subregional Office for North Africa is working with the Subregional Offices for Eastern, Southern and West Africa to implement the project on leveraging migrants' economic contributions to sustainable development.

2. Other international entities

32. In Libya, at the request of the United Nations country team, the Subregional Office for North Africa worked with the Resident Coordinator Office, UNDP and the United Nations Support Mission in Libya to produce a report featuring in-depth analysis of the political, economic and social challenges facing the country.[10] Published in May 2025, the report is now used for the country team's planning.

33. In Egypt and Sierra Leone, the Subregional Office worked with UNDP, in coordination with national institutions, to organize workshops on taxation and debt management.

34. To increase engagement with and remittances from the diaspora, representatives of the Subregional Office joined those of the World Bank, UNDP and the International Organization for Migration for meetings in the Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Lesotho and Tunisia, with a view to aligning the initiatives of all entities in those countries.

3. Companies, philanthropic organizations, universities and think tanks

35. As detailed above, the Subregional Office worked with Global Sovereign Advisory to provide advice and offer capacity-building workshops in Egypt and Sierra Leone. In a similar vein, the Subregional Office worked with Mohammed V University, Rabat, to organize a capacity-building workshop for officials of Libya. Furthermore, the Subregional Office, Financial Sector Deepening Africa and the Children's Investment Fund Foundation jointly organized the Regional Forum on Innovative Green Finance.

IV. Implementation of recommendations made by the Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts for North Africa at its thirty-ninth session

36. Throughout the reporting period, the work of the Subregional Office for North Africa was guided by the priorities set out in the recommendations made by the Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts for North Africa, which were included in the report of the Committee on its thirty-ninth session (E/ECA/COE/43/15/Rev.1). In the preceding sections of the present report, the efforts of the Subregional Office to respond to requests from members of ECA and to integrate their guidance into its work programme are detailed. In the present section, the most significant measures that ECA took to implement specific recommendations to assist its members in certain areas are summarized, with a particular emphasis on tangible results achieved in line with the priorities of its members.

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[10] Resident Coordinator Office of Libya, ECA, United Nations Support Mission in Libya and UNDP, "Libya's socio-economic landscape, 2025: challenges and pathways to sustainable development (Tripoli, Rabat, 2025).

A. Strengthening triangular and South-South cooperation, in particular between North and West Africa, exchanging best practices and expertise, and learning from comparative experiences in leveraging innovative digital technologies to boost intra-African trade

37. Extrabudgetary funding will be needed in order to implement this recommendation. Consultations within ECA are ongoing, including with the Regional Integration and Trade Division, with a view to identifying such sources of funding.

B. Strengthening their national strategies, accelerating the implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area and increasing regional integration, with a focus on high-value exports

38. The Subregional Office for North Africa conducted a study on the textile industry in Tunisia; supported the development of e-mobility value chains involving the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Morocco and Zambia; and provided capacity-building for officials of the Government of Libya on the incorporation of provisions of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area into domestic laws and frameworks, in particular as regards laws on trade and exports, ratification and the unlocking of the export potential of private companies. Lastly, in partnership with the Subregional Office for West Africa and the Regional Integration and Trade Division, the Subregional Office for North Africa organized a peer-to-peer learning meeting to enhance knowledge of the Agreement among African Governments and to promote its development and implementation.

C. Improving the mobilization of domestic financial resources, in particular by increasing tax revenue through digitalized tax systems and by combating tax evasion

39. The Subregional Office supported North African States through targeted capacity-building workshops and technical assistance designed to help them to strengthen tax systems, combat tax evasion and expand fiscal space. As detailed above, capacity-building workshops were held for officials of the tax authorities of Egypt, Libya and Mauritania. Through such initiatives, the Subregional Office is helping States to strengthen their tax policies and administration, accelerate the digitalization of revenue systems and build the institutional capacity required to mobilize domestic resources more effectively.

D. Improving their debt management, alleviating their debt burden and enhancing their debt sustainability

40. The Subregional Office for North Africa contributed to the efforts of African States to strengthen debt management and enhance sustainability, through advisory services, technical support and the convening of a number of meetings held in various countries across the continent. As set out in detail above, in Egypt, the Subregional Office for North Africa provided technical and advisory services, before working with Global Sovereign Advisory to hold a capacity-building workshop; in Sierra Leone, the Subregional Office for North Africa delivered advisory services and, in partnership with the Subregional Office for West Africa and Global Sovereign Advisory, a capacity-building workshop; and the Subregional Office for North Africa worked with Financial Sector Deepening Africa and the Children’s Investment Fund Foundation to convene the Regional Forum on Innovative Green Finance.

E. Increasing diaspora contributions to development, integrating diaspora contributions into national development strategies and directing remittances towards investment in the country of origin

41. In relation to the integration of remittances into development strategies and investment in the country of origin, the Subregional Office is, as detailed above, implementing the project on leveraging migrants' economic contributions to sustainable development in Africa, examples of which include the provision of advisory, technical and capacity-building services in Tunisia, and the provision of advisory and policy services in Egypt. In addition, the Subregional Office published policy briefs on remittances in North Africa, the demographic dividend and migration, and migration statistics and skills recognition, all of which are also detailed above.

F. Accelerating implementation of the two agendas

42. The Subregional Office assessed the progress made in North African countries in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through the report on progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in North Africa (ECA/SRO-NA/ICSOE/39/4–ECA/SRO-WA/ICSOE/27/4), submitted to the Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts for North Africa at its thirty-ninth session. In the report, emphasis was given to the need for innovative financing and it was recommended that better use should be made of remittances, through more conducive regulation, investment incentives for members of the diaspora, improved migration data and enhanced stakeholder coordination.

43. In 2025, the Subregional Office produced a report on progress made towards attaining Sustainable Development Goal 8[11] (promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all). In the report, which features analysis of inclusive and sustainable growth, stress is placed on persistent policy gaps. The report also includes proposed measures to boost productivity, reduce inequality and expand job opportunities, guiding North African countries towards a more sustainable and inclusive development model.

G. Exchanging economic information and enhancing statistics through training and studies in order to accelerate and monitor the implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area

44. As part of its support for African States in their national strategies for domestic implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, the Subregional Office for North Africa is working with the African Trade Policy Centre to design a step-by-step guide to such implementation. The guide will be validated in the final quarter of 2025 and initially rolled out in Mauritania.

[11] ECA/SRO-NA/ICSOE/40/5.

H. Boosting economic empowerment and supporting micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises and young and women entrepreneurs

45. In 2025, the Subregional Office for North Africa expanded its programme on small and medium-sized enterprises to strengthen companies led by women and to foster a supportive policy environment in North Africa, with a focus on harnessing the implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area to enhance growth and sustainability. The reporting period saw the second phase of the programme, which is detailed above, during which it was extended to Libya, Mauritania and Tunisia, in response to strong demand. One feature of the second phase was a high-level regional policy dialogue. Also, during the second phase, the authorities of Mauritania formally requested its expansion to cover small and medium-sized enterprises led by young people.

I. Leveraging innovative digital technologies to enhance digital cooperation and intra-African trade

46. In 2025, the Subregional Office, through the ECA Fellowship for Young African Professionals programme, is conducting a study of the digital landscape in North Africa to assess how new technologies can strengthen digital cooperation and intra-African trade. The research features mapping of the principal stakeholders, of regulatory frameworks and of infrastructure readiness, and opportunities for harmonization and interoperability are identified.

47. The study is focused on digital public infrastructure, cross-border payments and e-commerce platforms, with a view to generating practical policy recommendations that can lead to expanded access for small and medium-sized enterprises and entrepreneurs to markets elsewhere in the African Continental Free Trade Area. In the study, digital innovation is positioned as a driver of continental integration, inclusive growth and stronger cooperation among North African countries.

V. Challenges and lessons learned

48. Financing remained a major constraint throughout the reporting period. Budget cuts led to the suspension of some activities, including a number of projects that had been planned in partnership with other United Nations entities.

49. Another challenge was the widening scope of the themes covered, including in areas beyond the core expertise of the Subregional Office. In combination with limited resources, this diluting effect stretched the capacity of staff members and hindered equitable service to all States. A critical lesson is that there is a need to narrow the thematic focus and build synergies across workstreams, concentrate resources on priority areas and strengthen internal expertise and partnerships within ECA and with external partners, with a view to maximizing effectiveness.