Evaluation Report

Triennial Review on the Implementation of Recommendations in the report, Evaluation of subprogramme 1 of the Economic Commission for Africa, on macroeconomic policy and governance (E/AC.51/2022/12)

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IED-25-014

Inspection and Evaluation Division

Office of Internal Oversight Services

INSPECTION AND EVALUATION DIVISION

Function

"The Office shall evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of the implementation of the programmes and legislative mandates of the Organization. It shall conduct programme evaluations with the purpose of establishing analytical and critical evaluations of the implementation of programmes and legislative mandates, examining whether changes therein require review of the methods of delivery, the continued relevance of administrative procedures and whether the activities correspond to the mandates as they may be reflected in the approved budgets and the medium-term plan of the Organization;" (General Assembly Resolution 48/218 B).

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Contents

Summary

The present report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), prepared by the Inspection and Evaluation Division, presents the findings of the triennial review to assess the implementation of the four recommendations emanating from the OIOS programme evaluation of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in 2022 (E/AC.51/2022/12). The evaluation assessed ECA subprogramme 1, which was implemented by the Macroeconomic Policy and Governance Division (MPGD).

The triennial review determined that all four recommendations were implemented, and there was evidence of positive outcomes resulting from their implementation.

In response to recommendation 1 to strengthen performance monitoring across the Division, MFGD improved the use of SharePoint as a knowledge management system, which contributed to division-level gains in efficiency and coherence. It also introduced more consistent documentation of Member State requests and corresponding responses, including action plans and mission reports.

In response to recommendation 2 to strengthen collaboration with Resident Coordinator Offices (RCOs) and the United National Development System, ECA published a strategy and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) outlining the modes for engagement between ECA and the various United Nations Country Teams (UNCT) in the region. ECA also provided planning support, directly and through Opportunity and Issue Based Coalitions (OIBCs), to several UNCTs, including, for example the National Development Plan for Liberia. ECA additionally used its Vice Chair role in the Africa Regional Collaborative Platform to strengthen information-sharing and collaboration efforts with the RC system; for example, it co-convened a task force for the Africa regional knowledge management hub to synchronize its repository of requests and to achieve wider dissemination of the types of support offered by ECA and other United Nations entities.

In response to recommendation 3 to address the Division's high vacancy rate, MFGD institutionalised several measures to streamline recruitment, including the use of rosters, publication of vacancies, and use of digital professional networks. As a result, the Division saw a significant reduction in vacancy rates between 2022 and 2025, down from 44 percent to 17 percent.

In response to recommendation 4 regarding the mainstreaming of cross-cutting issues, ECA developed an action plan for operationalizing guidance on mainstreaming gender, human rights, disability inclusion and environmental sustainability. ECA also incorporated the four cross-cutting issues in reporting templates, evaluation frameworks, and the entity-wide Annual Business Plan. This ensured that MFGD mainstreaming efforts were regularly internally monitored and reported upon, as part of the quarterly Accountability and Programme Performance Reviews.

I. Introduction

1. At its sixty-second session in 2022, the Committee for Programme and Coordination considered the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), prepared by the Inspection and Evaluation Division, on the programme evaluation of subprogramme 1 of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) on macroeconomic policy and governance (E/AC.51/2022/12).[1]

2. In the present triennial review, OIOS examined the status of implementation of the four evaluation recommendations. The review also addressed, where possible, the extent to which implementation of the recommendations contributed to programme changes. All four were assessed to have been implemented.

3. The methodology for the triennial review included:

(a) A review and analysis of the biennial progress reports on the status of recommendations, which are monitored through the OIOS recommendation's database;
(b) An analysis of relevant information, documents and reports obtained from ECA related to the recommendations; and
(c) Virtual group interviews conducted with a purposive sample of fourteen ECA staff based at its headquarters in Addis Ababa.

4. The final draft was shared with ECA for its response, which is provided in Annex 1. OIOS expresses its appreciation to ECA for the cooperation and assistance provided in the conduct of the review.

II. Results

Recommendation 1
Strengthened subprogramme-wide performance monitoring of the Division.

5. Recommendation 1 read as follows:

ECA should strengthen subprogramme-wide performance monitoring of the Division. It should aim for more effective management of requests and intervention data and encourage systematic gathering of and reporting on outcomes. The performance monitoring system should capture:

(a) Consolidated requests by Member States derived from all channels within the Commission by thematic area of work;
(b) Completed and detailed mission reports on the implementation of capacity development activities;
(c) Systematic assessments of the delivery of every intervention and knowledge transfer through surveys or other means aimed at participants;
(d) Action plans developed with beneficiaries outlining strategies and steps that must be taken for interventions to succeed, including follow-up support from the Division;

[1] The Finance and Domestic Resource Mobilization Section was merged with the Macroeconomic Policy and Governance Division, SP 1, in 2025. Its name was changed to, Macroeconomics, Finance and Governance Division (MFGD).

(e) Assessment of outcomes achieved, with supporting evidence (where applicable).

Indicator of implementation: strengthened performance monitoring system incorporating all the elements outlined above

6. In response to the recommendation, MFGD strengthened its performance monitoring systems by consolidating requests by Member States, systematically completing detailed mission reports, collating systematic assessments of interventions, documenting detailed action plans and assessing outcomes. Strengthened performance monitoring systems were partly achieved through a more systematic approach to the use of SharePoint as a knowledge management system. All requests, responses, completed mission reports, and post-activity assessments were saved in two SharePoint locations: 1) a common Division folder, organised by type of document or record; and 2) a dedicated folder for each Section, organised by intervention. A mission log, including the responsible Section, destination, purpose, time period, staff member, and a link to the mission report, was also maintained for ease of reference. Folder classifications were periodically updated, to reflect changes in the MFGD structure and to ensure ease of navigation and accessibility for ongoing activities.

7. Furthermore, performance monitoring in the Division was strengthened through more systematic maintenance and tracking of requests from member States and the United Nations Country Teams (UNCT) in a Microsoft Excel-based, country assistance repository. The tracker included fields for thematic area, responsible Section, resulting training, and date of activity.[2] Responses were also saved in the appropriate SharePoint folder. For Member State requests pertaining to recurrent interventions such as the Integrated Planning and Reporting Tool (IPRT), specific tracker logs capturing more elaborate details were maintained.

8. The Division additionally developed, and systematically documented, more detailed action plans to guide the support offered by MFGD to Member States. These action plans captured planned actions in response to a Member State request, notified staff members, expected dates, logistical notes and status updates. For example, the action plan developed in response to Member State requests during the 2022 Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF) regional workshop in Abuja, Nigeria, assisted in the curation of subsequent ECA support, which in turn contributed to articulating Africa's position for the Fourth Financing for Development Conference to be held in Spain in June 2025. A template was available to guide the development of action plans and ensure a minimum level of standardization.

9. The assessment of the outcomes from MFGD interventions took place at several levels. At the Division level, the Annual Business Plan (ABP) provided the basis for an implementation plan, which identified the indicators of achievement, deliverables, actions, responsible persons, expected results, and timelines. The implementation plan was reviewed monthly at Section and Division levels, assessing performance against targets using a traffic light system, and providing a regular opportunity to course-correct. At the ECA entity level, quarterly Accountability and Programme Performance Reviews (APPR) were held to track and assess progress made against the results and targets established in the ABP. The APPR highlighted achievements and challenges, identified solutions and provided an opportunity to cross fertilize learning through experience sharing and quality feedback. Finally, together with the Strategic Planning Oversight and Results Division (SPOR-D), MFGD developed a division-wide monitoring and evaluation plan, in draft form as of April 2025.

[2] All requests were channelled to the relevant Section – Macroeconomic Analysis Section (MAS), Economic Governance and Public Finance Section (EGPFS), Development Planning Section (DPS) or the Finance and Domestic Resource Mobilization Section (FRDMS), which merged with MFGD in 2025.

10. Implementation of the recommendation through the actions described above have contributed to greater efficiency, coherence, and improved results in the Division. For example, in early 2025, all MFGD sections collaborated on the development of a funding proposal for RPTC. Staff interviewed across all sections also commended the consistent use of the cascading system of knowledge management.

11. Based on the above, OIOS considers this recommendation implemented. OIOS also determines that implementation of the recommendation has contributed to strengthened subprogramme-wide performance monitoring of the Division.

Recommendation 2
Strengthened and formalized information-sharing and collaboration efforts between the Division and the resident coordinator system and United Nations development system.

12. Recommendation 2 reads as follows:

ECA should strengthen and formalize information-sharing and collaboration efforts between the Division and the resident coordinator system and United Nations development system. The action taken should build on the operationalization of the Africa Regional Collaborative Platform, of which the Commission is a co-chair. ECA should develop services for its operational function that can be shared with partners and Member States at regular intervals. Furthermore, steps should be taken to enhance the planning and integration of activities with members of resident coordinator offices and United Nations country teams to ensure the overall coherence of United Nations activities in the country and that the right stakeholders are targeted in a timely manner by the Commission's interventions.

Indicators of implementation:

(a) active dissemination of ECA services
(b) evidence of enhanced planning and integration with United Nations country teams (UNCTs)

13. In response to the recommendation, MFGD undertook several initiatives with regard to strengthened collaboration with UNCTs. As one example, for the 2023 Economic Report on Africa, it collaborated with Resident Coordinator Offices (RCOs) in Egypt, Senegal, Morocco, Nigeria, South Africa, Mauritius, Ghana, Ethiopia, Uganda and Zambia. In these countries, the RCOs: helped identify case studies; initiated correspondence and scheduled meetings with key interlocutors; shared advance briefing materials, including concept notes and questionnaires; and accompanied ECA staff on field missions.

14. Further, ECA took several steps to formalize its collaboration with United Nations Development System (UNDS) entities. For example, ECA regularly collaborated with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the African Union Commission (AUC), and the African Development Bank (AfDB) on the publication of the annual *Africa Sustainable Development Report*. From 2023 onwards, these four entities commenced signing the foreword to that report, signifying joint ownership.

15. In addition, in collaboration with United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), ECA partnered with RCOs to pilot the statistical measurement of Illicit Financial Flows (IFFs) in 11 African countries. ECA also collaborated with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), UNDP, the United Nations Children's Fund

(UNICEF) and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), to partner with RCOs in the development of Integrated National Financing Frameworks (INFF). In addition, MFGD regularly partnered with UNDP and AfDB to organize the Annual African Economic Conference.

16. An engagement strategy to promote internal coherence and enhance collaboration between ECA and RCs/UNCTs was approved by the ECA Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and submitted to DCO in 2023. In 2024, Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) to operationalise the strategy were developed and rolled out. The SOP provided a structured framework to improve the congruence in engagements between ECA, RCOs, UNCTs and DCO. The SOP was planned to be piloted in 25 countries between 2024 and 2027 to test tailored implementation, maximise resource efficiency, and measure impact, before it is refined for broader application.[3]

17. The Africa Regional Collaborative Platform offered several opportunities to strengthen information-sharing and collaboration efforts between ECA, the RC system and the United Nations Development System (UNDS), as illustrated in the two examples below:

- As Vice Chair of the platform, ECA closely monitored the work of six Opportunity and Issue-based Coalitions (OIBC), and jointly led two of them:
    - OIBC-1: Strengthened integrated data and statistical systems for sustainable development, with United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA);
    - OIBC-2: Ensuring effective and efficient macroeconomic management and accelerated inclusive, economic transformation and diversification, with UNCTAD and UNDP.
- ECA also co-convened two task forces (TF) under the platform:
    - TF-2: Africa regional knowledge management hub, with International Labour Organization (ILO), and
    - TF-3: Enhancing transparency and results-based management at the regional level, with UNFPA.

18. Furthermore, as noted in paragraph 7 above, MFGD managed a repository of the requests for support that it received from various RCOs/UNCTs. In the future, the Division was considering transferring this repository to the abovementioned TF-2: Africa regional knowledge management hub, to facilitate broader access by all UNCT members, and to support the TF-2 community of practice.

19. The MFGD also coordinated with DCO in furthering the incorporation of Agenda 2063 through RCOs.[4] For example, in April 2025, in a pre-event for the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, MFGD presented the second ten-year implementation plan for Agenda 2063 to all Africa RCs.

20. Several positive outcomes were observed as a result of the active dissemination of ECA services through OIBCs. These included, for example:

[3] Countries of focus include the following: Central Africa (4): Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Equatorial Guinea, and Sao Tome and Principe; North Africa (4): Egypt, Libya, Mauritania and Morocco; Southern Africa (5): Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe; Western Africa (6): Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria and Senegal; and Eastern Africa (6): Burundi, Comoros, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda and Somalia.
[4] Agenda 2063 was adopted by the African Union Summit in January 2015 and is a framework for Africa's development till 2063, predating but nevertheless informing the development of the Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

- under OIBC-2 in Liberia, the RC documented the host government's request for assistance with the National Development Plan, and secured assistance from members of the UNCT and non-resident entities. Entity level contributions to meet the government's demand were compiled in a matrix, leveraging the comparative advantage of each organization. Using SDG funds, a technical consultant was engaged by ECA to coordinate the response in-country. ECA assisted in the digitization of the plan and its alignment with the SDGs and Agenda 2063.

- OIBC-4, on climate adaptation, hosted an all-day session on carbon market opportunities and challenges, which served to generate significant demand at the country level, such as by the RCO in Mozambique. Likewise, after learning about OIBC-1 on statistical systems, several countries introduced these in their cooperation frameworks.[5]

21. Based on the above, OIOS considers this recommendation implemented. OIOS also determines that implementation of the recommendation has contributed to strengthened information-sharing and collaboration between the Division and the Resident Coordinator system.

Recommendation 3
Take steps to address the high vacancy rate in the Division.

22. Recommendation 3 reads as follows:

ECA should take steps to address the high vacancy rate in the Division. In addition, it should explore strategies, including the use of rosters, for streamlining recruitment in the future and ensuring adequate staffing levels.

Indicators of implementation:

(a) expeditious recruitment of staff;
(b) evidence of necessary measures taken to reduce vacancy rates and streamline recruitment

23. In response to this recommendation, the Division undertook several measures to reduce the vacancy rate. These included: circulation by email of available positions to all ECA staff, embassies in-country, regional commissions, the International Development Association of the World Bank (IDA) and UN Women; enhanced use of professional social networks including LinkedIn, Devex and Impactpool; and regular updates of job postings on the Secretariat website: careers.un.org. The Division of Administration, through the Human Resource Management Service, provided credentials of rostered candidates, especially women, to hiring managers. A temporary recruitment campaign from June till December 2022 also helped to fill several vacancies.

24. Subsequent to the issuance of this recommendation, there was evidence of more expeditious staff recruitment and necessary measures taken to reduce vacancy rates and streamline recruitment processes. In December 2022, there were only two vacant posts in MFGD including one P3 Economic Affairs Officer and one G7 Senior Administrative Assistant. This was down from 8 vacant posts at the end of 2021, representing a vacancy rate of 11 per cent down from 44 per cent. MFGD staff interviewed attributed these reductions to the measures taken in response to the recommendation.

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[5] E/ECA/COE/43/10* January 2025. Report on UN support for the African Union and its New Partnership for Africa's Development programme.

25. As of April 2025, the Division had 6 vacant positions out of 35 (vacancy rate of 17 per cent), including two P-5, one P-4 and three P-3 level staff. Recruitment for these positions was at various stages: shortlisting of candidates had taken place for three positions, two more were expected to be recruited within two months, while one was in the final stages of candidate selection.

26. Based on the above, OIOS considers this recommendation implemented. OIOS notes the reduction in vacancy rates in the Division.

Recommendation 4

Develop, disseminate and implement guidance on mainstreaming cross-cutting issues in the areas of gender, disability inclusion and human rights.

Indicator of implementation: Completed action plan with specific steps and target dates for operationalizing guidance on mainstreaming key issues

27. A corporate level action plan with specific steps and target dates for operationalising guidance on mainstreaming cross-cutting areas of gender, disability inclusion, human rights and environmental sustainability was finalized in December, 2024. Other measures taken by ECA also supported the Division in further mainstreaming these cross-cutting issues.

28. First, the ECA Division on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women finalised the ECA gender mainstreaming policy which was rolled out internally to all Divisions, including MFGD, and to country partners. Second, the MFGD implemented the gender mainstreaming policy by adopting a systematic approach to collecting gender-disaggregated data on workshop participants, and to its work in support of policy formulation and implementation by governments. These actions encouraged greater gender-related priorities in governments' planning and reporting as well as increased women's participation in workshops and meetings arranged by the Division.

29. With further regard to its gender mainstreaming efforts, Member States were encouraged to nominate female participants for meetings organized by the Division. In 2024, 35 per cent of participants in workshops and trainings arranged by MGFD were female government officials, up from 28 per cent in 2023. Furthermore, the efforts towards gender mainstreaming ensured the adoption of gendered approaches for specific initiatives, thereby maintaining a focus on the particular needs and modalities of outreach to women and girls. For example,

- MFGD reached out to specific women's groups to effectively target women business developers in their dissemination of tools to create business plans,

- ECA offered targeted capacity building workshops for women leaders of small and medium enterprises (SMEs), focusing on export, digitalisation, and eco-friendly approaches.

30. With regard to mainstreaming disability inclusion, the ECA Disability Inclusion Policy was being developed under the stewardship of the Division of Administration. The Division regularly coordinated United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS) Standing Task Force meetings and created a working group to ensure that the United Nations Policy on disability was being upheld. In raising staff awareness on disability inclusion, a course on Inspira which presented an introduction to disability inclusion was made mandatory for all staff members, including those in MFGD. Accessibility considerations at the

Africa Regional Forum for Sustainable Development (AFRSD) ensured more meaningful participation for differently abled attendees.

31. Finally, since 2023, four cross-cutting areas – gender mainstreaming, disability inclusion, human rights, as well as environmental sustainability – were added to ECA Annual Business Plan, reporting templates, and frameworks for evaluations. It is expected that regular reporting on these areas will continue to be undertaken as part of the division-wide quarterly Accountability and Programme Performance Reviews (APPR).

32. Based on the steps taken in response to the recommendation, OIOS considers this recommendation implemented. OIOS also notes that several ECA-wide initiatives have contributed to enhanced mainstreaming of gender, disability inclusion and human rights in the Division.

III. Conclusion

33. Implementation of the recommendations discussed above contributed to several positive outcomes in the Division. These included:

- MFGD saw greater coherence across the work of its sections, through improved coordination and complementarities, thus strengthening its knowledge management at the division-level.
- ECA provided support to RCs and UNCTs through direct engagement, such as when approached by RCs or by host governments, as well as leveraged the OIBC platform to extend awareness about the types of support ECA could provide across various substantive areas.
- ECA engaged extensively in TF-2 – Africa regional knowledge management hub and aimed to synchronize its repository of UNCT requests to OIBCs with the aim of wider dissemination of the types of support offered by ECA and other United Nations entities.

34. In addition to MFGD achieving significant decreases in its vacancy rates, the steps instituted to ensure rapid recruitment, including the use of professional social networks, job postings on Inspira, and widespread email circulation of vacancies, equipped ECA to address this ongoing challenge in the longer-term. Finally, the inclusion of four cross-cutting areas – gender, human rights, disability inclusion, and climate and environment - in the ECA Annual Business Plan, reporting templates and evaluation frameworks facilitated the monitoring of mainstreaming efforts as part of the quarterly Accountability and Programme Performance Reviews.

IV. Annex 1: Management Response

Comments received from the Economic Commission of Africa

Message sent on behalf of Mr. Said Adejumobi, Director, Strategic Planning, Oversight and Results Division

We welcome the findings of the triennial review and note with appreciation the acknowledgment that the Commission has duly implemented all four recommendations identified by the 2022 OIOS evaluation of subprogramme 1. We are encouraged by the conclusion that no further recommendations were deemed necessary, which we take as a positive reflection of our commitment to continuous improvement and accountability in programme implementation.

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to the team that conducted the review for their thoroughness, professionalism, and constructive engagement throughout the process. Their collaborative approach greatly facilitated a transparent and effective review exercise, and we are grateful for the spirit of partnership that characterized the entire undertaking.

This outcome affirms the diligence of our teams in addressing oversight recommendations and strengthens our resolve to uphold the highest standards of programme management and evaluation in future cycles.