

Overview of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

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Abstract: *The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) was a child of struggle. Its establishment in Africa was severally opposed by the then colonial powers with territories in Africa. This article pin-points the painful facts that in spite of the spirited efforts of UNECA, more so, its cooperation with other similar organizations, Africa's economic and social woes persist. The peculiarity of the African political terrain has long been held as a reason for the snail-pace developmental projects in Africa. To properly assess the impact of UNECA in Africa, this article has come up with a general overview and mode of operation of UNECA in Africa. UNECA'S contribution to the socio-economic and infrastructural developments in Africa is the major highlight of this article. The major conclusion of this article is that UNECA must change its policies and work more closely with other regional organisations to meet up with the African priorities.*

Keywords: *Policies, Development, Programmes, Institutions, Economic.*

I. Introduction

The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) was established in 1958 by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations (UN) following a recommendation of the United Nations General Assembly¹ as one of the UN's five regional commissions. UNECA's mandate is to promote the economic and social development among its member states (the nations of the African continent²), foster intra-regional integration, and promote international cooperation for Africa's development. UNECA has its headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia with five sub regional headquarters in Yaounde, Cameroon (Central Africa), Kigali, Rwanda (East Africa), Tangier, Morocco (North Africa), Lusaka, Zambia (Southern Africa) and Niamey, Niger (West Africa)³. IJNECA is one of the largest UN regional commissions, yet over its lifetime it has had to work hard for its voice to be heard⁴.

It must be noted that, UNECA's creation in 1958 only came about after thirteen years of struggle and the repeated defeat of successive proposals to create a commission along the same lines as those that existed for Europe, Latin America, and Asia. The five colonial powers with territory in Africa were all strongly opposed to the establishment of a commission. At the time of the UN's founding, there were only four independent countries in Africa-Egypt, Ethiopia, Liberia and South Africa. Presently fifty four countries are members of UNECA. The inaugural session of the UNECA at the end of 1958 was the first major gathering of Africans, under the auspices of the UN, to discuss African problems on African soil.

UNECA's early years were dominated by political battles against colonialism, racism, and apartheid and preoccupied with the development problems of collective self-reliance, endogenous development, and regional

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¹ United Nations General Assembly Resolution 1155 Session 12 Proposed Economic Commission for Africa on 26th

November 1957. Retrieved May 26th, 2013 from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_nations_economic_commission_for_Africa

² Overview of the ECA. IJNECA. Retrieved May 26th, 2013 from <http://www.uneca.org/about/ecaloverview-of-eca.htm>

³ Organizational Structure of United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA). Published by the Administration and Liaison Office, Africa Hall, UNECA Headquarters, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. May 1963. Retrieved May 26th, 2013 from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_Economic_Commission_for_Africa#Cite_note-4

⁴ Adedeji, A. (2009) the Economic Commission for Africa: Fighting to be Heard. Briefing Note Number 21. July, 2009. 1 United Nations Intellectual History Project. Published by Ralph Bunche Institute for International Studies- The CUNY Graduate Center. Retrieved May 15th, 2013 from www.UNhistory.org

economic integration. It took the member states of the commission many years to realize that marching toward the future hand in hand with its colonial mono-cultural economic legacy held no dignified future for Africa at all. Thus, there was a need for African governments and people to stop nibbling at the inherited colonial economic system and strive to achieve breakthrough in socioeconomic transformation.

United Nations Economic Commission for Africa's (UNECA'S)
Role in the Economic and Social Development of Africa

UNECA has contributed to the economic and social development of Africa through its various programmes which is structured into seven divisions namely:

- Microfinance Policy
- Social development
- Regional integration, Infrastructure and Trade
- Natural Resource Management (Food Security & Sustainable Development)
- ICT Innovation, Science & Technology
- Gender
- Governance & Public Administration⁵

II. Macroeconomic Policies

The financial sector plays a critical role in economic growth and poverty reduction. Theoretical and empirical research has shown a positive correlation between a sound financial sector and economic development.⁶ The financial sector's contribution to development and poverty reduction is realized in several ways. First, it provides the facilities and instruments for mobilizing savings and allocating them for consumption and investment purposes. Second, a well-developed financial system enhances the effectiveness of macroeconomic policies that promote price stability, which itself is conducive to development and superior economic performance⁷. Third, the financial sector is the main channel through which countries enter the mainstream of globalization and gain benefits via increased trade, capital flows, and access to technological know-how. Fourth, it provides financial services used as inputs in other productive sectors. Fifth, the financial sector has the ability to contribute directly to poverty reduction through such channels as microfinance institutions and the informal sector, which provide savings and loan facilities to micro, -small and medium-scale enterprises (MSMEs), as well as the urban and rural poor on a sustainable basis.

In pursuit of its mandate to promote the economic development of its member States, UNECAs work in the field of macroeconomic places particular emphasis on collecting and analyzing data, preparing annual surveys, and producing profiles and reports on economic conditions, governance and development management in Africa. UNECA consistently advocates for a predictable and sound macroeconomic policy framework that is supportive of inclusive growth, private sector development, employment, value addition, economic transformation and sustainable development. Through its publications, such as the Economic Report on Africa, the Commission disseminates best practices of specific aspects of economic management within Africa.

UNECA's policy research aims to share knowledge on various aspects of development strategy and planning in Africa, including policy coordination and implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. Its long-term approach focuses on tracking and analyzing trends in economic growth. Finance, and governance, in countries of the region and making recommendations on measures for wealth creation and poverty reduction. Additionally, the Commission undertakes national and regional policy studies on economic reforms, domestic resource mobilization, international and illicit financial flows, external debt, and exchange rate management.

UNECA also supports the fostering of an enabling environment for the development of the financial sector, entrepreneurship and private sector operations. The reduction of the high incidence of poverty on the continent is one of the key Millennium Development Goals. To achieve the MDGs, African countries must pursue strategies to promote sustainable and equitable growth and development. In that regard, UNECA assists its member States in formulating and implementing related policies, as well as in monitoring progress towards the MDGs and the implementation.

⁵*Op. cit* (Footnote 3)

⁶Carl-Johan L., *et al.*, "Bank Soundness and Macroeconomic Policy" (Washington, DC: IMF, 1996).

⁷*Ibid.* A banking system that is in distress can distort allocative efficiency and macroeconomic policy implementation, even though it can continue to function as long as it remains liquid. In addition to complicating monetary management, banking system unsoundness can also impose high costs in the form of fiscal obligations and other macroeconomic distortions.

The African microfinance industry has used an array of approaches ranging from traditional group based- systems to specialized lending by banks, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), non-bank financial institutions, cooperatives, rural banks, savings and postal financial institutions. The Community-Based approach in Micro Finance industry development that is commonly followed in African countries has been to rely on local communities to support the development of MFIs, outside the formal banking sector. Consequently, traditional community based cooperative groups such as local clubs and village bank associations have played a central role in the savings mobilization effort and the expansion of microfinance services in Africa.⁸

The demand for microfinance in Africa is large and the types of services the poor and low income client's demand vary across the board. Poor and low-income people need and want a range of financial products and services to build income and wealth, smooth expenditure patterns, and reduce risk (e.g. deposits, loans, payment services, leasing, money and remittance transfers, pensions, and insurance). In Africa, savings services are in greater demand than loans.⁹ Microfinance has the world wide potential of serving the 1.2 billion people that live on less than 1 USD per day, including 320 million Africans.¹⁰

Notably, the African Development Bank (AfDB) which came into force on 10th September, 1964 and began operation in 1966 was established under the auspices of UNECA. The purpose of the Bank is to contribute to the sustainable economic development and social progress of its regional members individually and jointly through financing of investment projects and programmes relating to the economic and social development of Africa.¹¹

III. Social Development

Developmental Social Policy is relevant to human welfare.¹² Africa's steady economic growth and positive socio economic indicators are yet to translate into benefits and opportunities for all men and women on the continent. Persistent inequality, poverty and inequity in access to social services and economic opportunities, particularly for youth, the aged, persons with disabilities and women, are creating deficits in human development, and slowing progress towards achieving development and democracy goals.

To assist Member States develop and implement progressive social policies and practices to address this challenge. The UNECA undertakes comprehensive secondary and empirical research to support policy making and programming for inclusive, equitable and sustainable development in Africa. The Commission's work extends to the provision of comprehensive and accurate information to report on global processes on social policy, including the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). Tools and guidelines are developed to facilitate the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of socio economic policies and programmes.

UNECA generates new knowledge on the demographic transition and its implications for economic and social development in Africa, including studies on fertility, mortality and health, migration, the changing age structure of the population, and population distribution. To facilitate the design, implementation and monitoring of socially inclusive and youth sensitive poverty reduction programmes in Africa, UNECA develops a robust body of analytical and policy oriented research that focuses on areas such as developments in human settlements, urbanization and urban management, international and internal migration, employment, and others factors affecting socio economic development in Africa.

IV. Regional Integration, Infrastructure and Trade

Regional integration, improved infrastructure and intra-regional trade are key strategy for development and are expected to produce considerable economic gains for Africa. Although it is widely recognized that intra-regional trade could play a significant role in accelerating economic growth and poverty reduction and enhancing food and energy security in Africa, the continent continues to trade little with itself.

⁸Basu A., *et al.* "Microfinance in Africa: Experience and Lessons Learned" (2004). Retrieved May 20th, 2013 from <http://www.microfinance-in-africa.org>

⁹Anne-Lucie, L. Isern, J. Mwangi, P. and Brown, M. "Overview of the Outreach and Financial Performance of MFIs in Africa," The Mix Market, Washington, DC, April 2005. Retrieved May 26th 2012 from http://www.mixmarket.org/medialibrary/mixmarket/Africa_Data_Study.pdf.

¹⁰Microcredit Summit Campaign, Annual Report: Microcredit Summit Campaign, 2004.

¹¹Agreement Establishing the African Development Bank. 2011 Edition. Retrieved May 15th, 2013 from <http://www.jus.uio.no/english/services/library/treaties/13/13-01/african-dev-bank.xml>

¹²Lan, G. Geof, W. Armando, B. Philippa, B. Davis, P. and Room, G. (2004) "Insecurity and Welfare Regime in Asia, Africa and Latin America-Social Policy in Development Contexts" (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2004)

UNECA's overarching focus is to promote policies and programmes that strengthen the process of economic cooperation and integration in furtherance of the Abuja Treaty establishing the African Economic Community and the Constitutive Act of the African Union. To achieve this aim the African Heads of States established the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). The APRM is hailed as the most innovative and progressive programme of NEPAD.¹³ A regional process under the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is designed to promote good governance and institutional change, increase growth and generate sustainable socioeconomic development and greater regional integration on the continent.¹⁴

In that context, the Commission places particular emphasis on strategic studies that generate recommendations to advance the regional cooperation and integration agenda. For instance, the most recent edition of *Assessing Regional Integration Report* tackles the Continental Free Trade Area as its theme. The need to strengthen the negotiating skills and positions of African countries in global and regional trade negotiations particularly in the World Trade Organization is a major area of focus and UNECA has evolved a number of trade-related capacity development and technical assistance programmes. Furthermore, through the African Trade Policy Centre (ATPC), the Commission works closely with Member States to identify measures to increase the competitiveness of African economies to boost intra-African trade and their participation in international trade.

In the area of infrastructure, the UNECA is sharpening its focus on innovative mechanisms to mobilize resources and address the financing challenge of Africa's infrastructure, which has remained a priority issue in its Regional Integration Committees and Expert Group meetings. Under the theme of regional integration and trade, UNECA sees tremendous opportunities in providing policy-oriented research on the interplay and linkages between investment policy and the key drivers of regional integration, agriculture, food security, energy, infrastructure, trade and industrialization.

V. Natural Resource Management

Africa holds a huge proportion of the world's natural resources of which only a fraction is currently being exploited. In order for Africa to reap the economic and social benefits inherent in this wealth, it is necessary to urgently address such issues as proper management and the environmental impact of their exploitation as well as eliminate all forms of foreign economic exploitation.¹⁵ If well managed, Africa's mineral endowments can lift the continent out of poverty and catapult it to growth, development and prosperity for all.

One important aspect of UNECA's work on natural resources is the conduct of policy-oriented research aiming to support the policy legal and regulatory frameworks for the proper management of natural resources in Africa. Also, UNECA seeks to enhance the knowledge base needed to strengthen human and institutional capacities and broaden stakeholder participation with regard to the protection of Africa's environment and the exploitation and management of its mineral resources.

Thus, in 2006 the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) initiated a continent-wide study on spatial development initiatives (SDIs) that proposed an indicative list of development corridors across the continent, mainly anchored on mineral resources, which could underpin development in order sector¹⁶. The SDI aims to provide a practical way to achieve a regional approach to development which goes beyond the

¹³See Hope R.K. (2005) "Toward Good Governance and Sustainable Development: The African Peer Review Mechanism Government". *An International Journal of Policy, Administration and Institutions*, Vol. 18, No. 2. Pp. 283-3116 and Jerome A. (2005) "The African Peer Review Mechanism: An Update and Evaluation", Paper Prepared for Presentation at the Conference on NEPAD and the future of economic policy in Africa held at IDEP, Dakar, Senegal, 9-12 November 2005.

¹⁴Nnadozie E., Kavazeua K., and Kruger R., "NEPAD's APRM and the Investment Climate in Africa", available at www.oecd.org/investment/investmentfordevelopment/41831968.pdf (accessed 8/3/2014).

¹⁵Article 21 (5) of the Africa (Banjul) Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights Adopted 27th June 1981, OAU Doc. CAB/LEG/67/3 rev. 5, 21 I.L.M. 58 (1982), entered into force 21 October 1986. Article 21 (5) provides: "States parties to the present Charter shall undertake to eliminate all forms of foreign economic exploitation particularly that practiced by international monopolies so as to enable their peoples to fully benefit from the advantages derived from their national resources."

¹⁶Evans P.B., (2010) "Constructing the 21st Century Developmental State: Potentialities and Pitfalls" in Omano Edigheji (ed) "Constructing a democratic developmental State in South Africa: Potentials and Challenges" (South Africa: HRSC Press, 2010) p. 37

limitations of multi-country projects. Encouraging sustained process of integrated development within a region designed by its economic potential rather than its political boundaries”¹⁷.

Africa is well endowed with mineral resources and has a long history of mining, but has so far not reaped the developmental benefits from these resources. This is largely due to the weak integration of Africa’s mining sector into national economic and social activities. The African Union (AU) Heads of State and Government have taken deliberate steps to address this weakness, through the endorsement of the Africa Mining Vision (AMV) and the establishment of the African Minerals (AMDC) in February, 2009 to provide strategic operational support for the Vision and its Action Plan.

The Africa Mining Vision advocates for “Transparent, equitable and optimal exploitation of mineral resources to underpin broad-based sustainable growth and socio-economic development”. At the centre of the Vision is a developmental state that integrates the mining sector into broader social and economic developmental processes which addresses not only the sector’s isolation from mainstream social and economic activities, but to create win-win outcomes for all stakeholders.¹⁸

More so, there is consensus that the transformation of agriculture needs to be accelerated in order to enhance food security and support the resilience of African small-farm-holders to future shocks. UNECA therefore assists Member States in the development and implementation of necessary transformative structural measures to meet the ever-growing demand for food. The inter-linkages between industrialization and agriculture to address the issues of value addition and strategic commodity chains form part of the Commission’s research work in this area. The issue of land and water management is also high on the Commission’s agenda. In this regard, it undertakes and disseminates strategic studies on land and water management issues to improve the capacity of member States in analyzing and managing policies to address the issues of land, water and regional integration in their interrelated nature.

VI. Information Communication Technology (ICT), Science and Technology

Building on the experience of the implementation of the African Information Society Initiative and the African Innovation framework, UNECA is focusing on assisting African countries and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in the formulation, adoption and implementation of new technology and innovation policies that will help them accelerate the transformation process to improve the competitiveness of their firms, the welfare of their citizens, including ensuring their collective and individual security. UNECA also conducts research on national and regional innovation systems, technology transfer, and on new and emerging technology likely to support economic transformation, and in key areas such as agriculture and social service delivery, where innovations and new technologies can support economic transformation and human resource development.

Africa’s image problem is also an important consideration.¹⁹ International investors have a negative and at times, ill-founded perception of Africa that undermines the effects of economic reform on capital flows. While foreign capital is considered essential in financing private sector development in Africa, the continent has not benefited significantly from the surge in private capital flows to developing countries since the early 1990s. Africa remains on the sidelines of financial globalization. For example, over the period of 1989 to 2004, Sub-Saharan Africa’s (SSA) share in the world’s Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) flows averaged 1 percent compared to 10 percent and 17 percent for Latin America and the Caribbean, and Asia and the Pacific, respectively.²⁰

Also, 56 percent of firms surveyed in an UNCTAD study reported that the actual business environment in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) is better than the continent’s image would suggest.²¹ This finding is corroborated by empirical evidence which suggests that credit rating agencies tend to rate African countries as riskier than

¹⁷Kaufman, D. Aart, K. and Massimo, M. 2009. Governance Matters VIII: Aggregate and Individual Government Indicators, 1996-2008, World Bank Policy Research Working Paper No. 4978. Retrieved May 25th, 2013 from <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1424591>

¹⁸Abdoulie, J. and Jean, P. 2011. Minerals and Africa’s Development: The International Study Group Report on Africa’s Mineral Regimes. Published by the Economic Commission for Africa, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

¹⁹Asiedu E., (2005) “On the Determinants of Foreign Direct Investment to Developing Countries: Is Africa Different?” *World Development*, 30 (1), 2005. Pp. 107-19.

²⁰See UNCTAD, “Foreign Direct Investment in Africa: Performance and Potentials,” United Nations Publication. New York, 1999; UNCTAD, *World Investment Report: Promoting Linkages*, Geneva: United Nations Publication, 2001; UNCTAD, *World Investment Report: Transnational Corporations and Export Competitiveness*, Geneva: 2001. United Nations Publication, 2002 and UNCTAD, *World Investment Report: Transnational Corporations and the Internalization of R & D* (Geneva: United Nations Publication, 2005).

²¹UNCTAD, UNCTAD Press Release, 2000. See www.unctad.org/en/press/pr2854en.htm

warranted by their macroeconomic fundamentals.²² Also, because of a lack of information about individual African countries and their investment opportunities, investment decisions are often based on inferences from the environment of neighboring states rather than on country-specific conditions.²³

VII. Gender

Over the last few decades, gender mainstreaming has involved a shift from a focus on specific and targeted interventions that aimed to empower women along particular thematic lines to an approach which would ensure systematic institutional policy analysis from a gender perspective.²⁴ The African Center for Gender and Social Development (ACGSD) of the UNECA organized an online discussion on “Gender Mainstreaming in National Policies and Programmes” to reinvigorate a dialogue on what approaches have been taken, with regard to mainstreaming gender, in national policies and what have been the outcomes.²⁵

Commendable efforts have been made on the African continent to address gender inequality and women’s empowerment. This is due to the political commitment that a large number of member States have made and progressive policy measures they have adopted in line with the obligation that “States Parties shall combat all forms of discrimination against women through appropriate legislative, institutional and other measures”.²⁶ However, these gains have not been sufficient to bridge the gender gap and inequalities, more specifically as they relate to women.

For example, though microfinance plays a critical role in achieving development effectiveness by contributing to poverty reduction, increased political, social and economic development, social empowerment, community participation, school attendance of children and economic prosperity (especially for women).²⁷ There is ample evidence to demonstrate that women experience extreme socio-cultural constraints in participating and benefiting from microfinance.²⁸ This can be attributed, among other reasons to unequal access to productive resources, given the inequalities within the household and lack of property especially land that can be offered as collateral for loans and for generating capital.

Microfinance has transformative capacity in that it has the potential to provide women with the opportunity to build a pathway to empowerment. It can strengthen a series of interlinked and mutually reinforcing “virtuous spirals”²⁹ of empowerment through which women can own and control incomes and assets and contribute to household incomes. This in turn could increase their role in economic decision making in the household leading to greater well being for women and children as well as men. These positive outcomes notwithstanding, existing research and anecdotal evidence suggest that direct relationship between access to microfinance and an increase in women empowerment and their status within households and communities cannot be assumed and is certainly not automatic.³⁰ It has been observed first, that many aspects of gender inequality such as discriminatory land laws and policies, the unequal division of domestic responsibilities, and educational biases cannot be dealt with through microfinance.

²²Hague N., et al., “Rating Africa: The Economic and Political Content of Risk Indicators”, (CollierP., et al., (eds), *Investment & Risk in Africa* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000) p. 33 to p. 70

²³*Op. Cit* (Footnote 14)

²⁴United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) (1999). Report on Sixth African Regional Conference on Women on Mid-Term Review of the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action 22-26 November 1999. Addis-Ababa.

²⁵United Nations Economic Commission for Africa E-network for National Gender Machineries Synthesis Report of E-discussions: “Gender Mainstreaming in National Policies and Programmes”. 20th June, 2012. African Centre for Gender and Social Development, Addis Ababa.

²⁶Article 2 (1) (e). Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa Adopted by the 2nd Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union in Maputo, 11th July 2003. See also, Article 2 (1) (e). Simplified Version of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa. Edited by Koffi Kounte. Published by Women in Law and Development in Africa-West Africa (WiLDAF-West Africa). Lome, Togo. Also available www.wildaf-ao.org. See also, Articles 1-3 of the Convention on the Declaration on all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) of 1979.

²⁷“Microfinance, Policy and Strategy for the Bank Group”, Published by the Operations Policies and Review Department of the Bank Group. May 2006.

²⁸OECD Gender Tipsheets. Enterprise Development: Micro-Credit and Equality between Men and Women. Retrieved May 26th 2013 from www.oecd.org/tipsheet.

²⁹Mayoux, L. (2001), “Microfinance and Women Empowerment: Rethinking Best Practice,” *Development Bulletin*, No 57

³⁰Hunt, J. (2002) “Reflections on Microfinance and Women Empowerment,” *Development Bulletin*, No 57 pp 71-75.

According to the UNDP, inequality is measured by the prevalence of poverty in society, along with the ability to access education, employment, training and basic infrastructure, additionally it measures the distribution of income and income inequality.³¹ Women's economic and social advancement is a crucial precondition for Africa's development. This calls for strengthening of policies, programmes and targeted financing to better address women's empowerment. This also entails the adoption and implementation of regional and international commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment.

The African Centre for Gender (ACG) of the UNECA provides technical support to member States to address gender inequality and women's empowerment through developing tools and providing evidence for policy formulation and effective implementation. It also facilitates the tracking and monitoring of the implementation of the agreed commitments and declarations. The Centre's strategy includes undertaking analytical work and identifying good practices for member States to adapt in order to sharpen their approaches in addressing gender inequality — for instance through the African Women's Report.

It has also developed a unique tool, the Gender and Development Index, to measure progress in the achievement of gender equality in Africa. The work of the Centre includes initiatives such as time-use studies, gender and macro-economic modeling, and gender statistics. Additionally, it has galvanized an active network through online knowledge platforms to engage national gender machineries and civil society. These platforms include the African Women's Rights Observatory and the E-network of National Gender Machineries.

VIII. Governance

Effective governance is vital for sustainable development, poverty eradication and socioeconomic transformation. Good governance underpinned by strong and functional institutions is critical for increasing domestic and foreign investment. Both contribute towards a more favourable business, environment by addressing coordination failures,³² promoting political stability, enforcing property rights, regulating economic activities, and upholding the rule of law.³³ In short, an increase in investment and private sector growth requires an institutional framework that supports a well-functioning market economy.

Functional institutions, visionary leadership, and participatory governance mechanisms are key ingredients of the transformative agenda in Africa. Such an institutional milieu underpins economic and social development as it favours long term investment, unlocks the potential for domestic resource mobilization, unleashes entrepreneurial capacity and induces broad-based participation and property rights. Underscoring the centrality of accountable, inclusive and effective public administration in the process of development, UNECA continues to deepen its work in the areas of illicit financial flows, anti-corruption, public financial management and efficient public sector practices for better service delivery.

UNECA puts significant emphasis on collecting and analyzing data, preparing annual surveys and producing profiles and reports of the socio-economic, political conditions, economic and corporate governance and development management in the African region; disseminating information relating to experience and best practices of specific aspects of economic management within Africa; analyzing and monitoring of trends in governance, transparency accountability, service delivery and economic transformation in countries of the region and making recommendations on measures for inclusive growth, employment and poverty reduction.

UNECA'S policy research and studies, technical support and advisory services are designed to assist member States in improving economic governance and development management including strengthening the rule of law, state legitimacy, trust in governance institutions and reducing corruption. They are also geared towards strengthening public sector management systems, including management of public finances and improving overall governance institutions, accountability and public sector operations. UNECA's activities in the area of governance are undertaken with full involvement of government, private sector, civil society and other stakeholders through research and analytical work, advocacy, advisory services, technical assistance to member States, training and sensitization programs at national and sub-regional levels.

³¹ United Nations Development Program (UNDP) 2009, Human Development Report Nigeria 2008-2009, United Nations Development Program, May 10th 2010. Retrieved May 15th, 2013 from http://web.ng.undp.org/documents/NHDR2009/NHDR_SUMMARY_2008-2009.pdf

³² Bardhan P., (2005) "Institutions Matter, But Which Ones? Economies in Transition," Vol. 13 (3). Pp 499-532. Co-ordination failure may be the result of external and internal shocks that can lead to protracted economic crises and also manifest itself as a mismatch between abundant natural resources and economic performance. Shirley M.M. (2005) "Institutions and Development". Menard, C. and Shirley, M.M. [Eds] "Handbook of New Institutional Economics", (Netherlands: Springer, 2005) pp. 611-638.

³³ Rodrik, D. (2000) "Institutions for High-Quality Growth: What They Are and How to Acquire them", Studies in Comparative International Development, Vol. 35, No. 3.

The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights³⁴ and the African Peer Review Mechanism³⁵ are two continental institutions that oversee possibilities for enhancing the evaluation of government performance. The African Charter on Human and People's Rights includes provisions on managing natural resources.³⁶ For the African Peer Review Mechanism, it has been observed that "requiring governments and civil society to engage collectively over the issues that face the nation, and to do so using the evidence from development practice helps to improve both the incidence and quality of evidence-based decision-making".³⁷

United Nations Economic Commission for Africa's (UNECA'S) Policy Centres

UNECA'S Policy Centre's include African Institute for Economic Development and Planning, African Minerals Development Centre, African Trade Policy Centre, Land Policy Initiative, African Climate Policy Centre and the African Centre for Statistics.

African Institute for Economic Development and Planning

The African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP) which began its operations on 21st November, 1963 is a pan-African institution created in 1962 by the General Assembly of the United Nations. The Institute United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) with primary mandate of accompanying and support newly independent African countries in their quest to build their human resource capacities as a necessary prerequisite for sustaining independence and promoting socio-economic development. To this end, it works closely with the ministries of finance, economic development and planning of its African Member-States to assess their needs and develop general, specialized, and tailor-made courses for the building and upgrading of the technical aptitudes and proficiencies of their mid-career and senior government officials in economic management and development planning.³⁸

African Minerals Development Centre

The mission of the Centre is to work with member States and their national and regional organizations to promote the transformative role of mineral resources in the development of the continent through increased economic and social linkages. A key objective of the Centre is to ensure that Africa's interests and concerns in this lucrative sector are properly articulated and internalized throughout the continent, for the benefit and prosperity of all. The AMDC advocates for the enhanced use of geological and geospatial information to manage long-term developmental outcomes in African mining countries, as well as a well-governed African mining sector that is socially and environmentally accountable. The Centre also aims to contribute to the fostering of a highly skilled and knowledge-driven mining sector which delivers greater economic and social benefits as a result of high productivity levels.³⁹

African Trade Policy Centre

The African Trade Policy Centre (ATPC) was established in June 2003. The main objective of the Centre since its establishment has been to strengthen the human and institutional capacities of African Governments to formulate and implement sound trade policies and participate more effectively in trade negotiations at the bilateral, regional and multilateral levels since policies toward foreign trade are among the most important factors that promotes economic growth and convergence in developing countries.⁴⁰ Emphasis is also placed on Foreign Direct Investments which has a significant impact on output of the economy.⁴¹ This is also to be

³⁴Rodrik, D. (2006) "Economic Growth in the 1990s: Learning from a Decade of Reforms, Goodbye Washington Consensus, Hello Washington Confusion? A Review of the World Bank, *Journal of Economic Literature*, vol. 44No. 4 Pp. 973-987.

³⁵Paul Stevens and Evelyn Dietsche "Resource Curse: An Analysis of Causes, Experiences and Possible Ways Forward", *Energy Policy* 36 (2008) 56-65 available at www.elsevier.com/locate/enpol (accessed 8/3/2014)

³⁶United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA). 2004. *Managing Mineral Wealth*. Addis Ababa: UNECA.

³⁷United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) 2011. *Economic Report on Africa: Governing Development in Africa – The Role of the State in Economic Transformation*. Addis Ababa. UNECA.

³⁸African Institute for Economic Development and Planning. Retrieved May 15th, 2013 from AIEDP <http://www.uneca.org/idep>

³⁹African Minerals Development Centre. Retrieved May 15th, 2013 from <http://www.uneca.org/amdc>

⁴⁰Francisco, R. and Dani, R. (2000) "Trade Policy and Economic Growth: A Skeptic's Guide to the Cross-National Evidence". NBER Macroeconomics Annual. Vol. 15, 2001. Retrieved June 10th, 2013 from <http://www.nber.org/chapters/C11058>. Also, see IMF Economic Report. 1997, P. 84.

⁴¹Onakoya, A.B. (2012) "Foreign Direct Investments and Economic Growth in Nigeria: A Disaggregated Sector Analysis." *Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development*. Vol. 3, No. 10.

supported and facilitated by the involvement of other relevant stakeholders Such as the private sector, civil society, and academia in research, training, information dissemination and advisory services to build consensus and achieve inclusive outcomes.

Some of the results achieved by ATPC thus far include enhanced African capacity to develop technical trade proposals, increased understanding of the important role of trade in development, increased coordination and harmonization of regional and sub-regional trade positions, increased credibility and influence, promoting Regional Integration by working in collaboration with the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and African trade organizations to strengthen institutional capacity in managing trade processes and trade analysis.⁴²

Land and Policy Initiative

The Land Policy Initiative is a joint programme of the tripartite consortium consisting of the African Union Commission (AUC), the African Development Bank (AB) and United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA). Its purpose is to enable the use of land to lend impetus to the process of African development through equitable access, efficient and sustainable utilization of land. After having developed the Framework and Guidelines (F&G) on land policy in Africa, and received the mandate from the African Union (AU) to use it in support of national and regional land policy processes, the LPI is now moving towards assisting AU Member States in developing or reviewing their land policies as well as in implementing and evaluating these policies in order to achieve socio-economic development peace and security and environmental sustainability.⁴³

African Climate Policy Centre

The ACPC is an integral part of the Climate for Development in Africa (ClimDev-Africa) programme, which is a joint initiative of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa(UNECA), the African Union Commission (AUC), and the African Development Bank (AfDB). The African Climate Policy Centre (ACPC) primary functions are knowledge generation on climate change in Africa and strengthening the use of such information for decision making, by improving analytical capacity, knowledge management and dissemination activities.⁴⁴

African Centre for Statistics

UNECA through the African Centre for Statistics serve as a regional service centre for data on economic, social, demographic, and environmental conditions in African countries. In this light its activities in this field are focused on conducting research on statistical concepts, methods and standards to support governments and regional institutions in the production and use of quality statistics in support of development efforts. UNECA also promotes the harmonization of statistics across African countries through the adoption of international statistical norms, standards and classifications, and adaptation to regional and national realities.

In addition, UNECA assists member States to undertake statistical operations, including censuses. UNECA's advisory services to member States aim to establish efficient statistical infrastructure for the collection, processing, analysis, dissemination and archiving of statistics in various areas. UNECA works in collaboration with the Statistical Commission for Africa (StatCom-Africa) as the apex inter-governmental body on statistical capacity development in Africa, as well as the African Statistical Coordination Committee (ASCC) and the Forum for African Statistical Development (FASDEV).⁴⁵

IX. Factors Affecting UNECA in the Economic and Social Development of Africa

Political Instability

Conflict has been a recurring feature of most African states throughout the pre and post independence period. According to the World Bank, nearly 20 African countries have experienced at least one period of civil war in the post-independence period.⁴⁶ Conflicts in Africa have had far reaching negative effects, often undermining post-independence gains on the economic and social front. Some of the costs include the destruction of physical

⁴²African Trade Policy Centre. Retrieved May 15th, 2013 from <http://www.uneca.org/atpc>

⁴³Land Policy Initiative. Retrieved May 15th, 2013 from <http://www.uneca.org/lpi>

⁴⁴The African Climate Policy Centre (ACPC). Retrieved May 15th, 2013 from <http://www.uneca.org/acpc>

⁴⁵African Centre for Statistics. Retrieved May 15th, 2013 from <http://www.uneca.org/acs>

⁴⁶Paul Collier, Economics Policy in Post-Conflict Societies,"in Augustin Fosu and Paul Collier (Eds). "Post Conflict Economies in Africa" (London: Palgrave MacMillan Publishers, 2005) Pp. 45-46. Although there are fewer African countries involved in conflict today than a decade ago, post-conflict states face a high risk of reverting back to conflict. Empirical evidence shows that a typical post-conflict state has a 50 percent probability of reverting to conflict within five years of cessation of conflict.

infrastructure, loss of institutional and social capital, loss of life and flight of human and financial capital.⁴⁷ Empirical evidence shows that political instability discourages investment with negative consequences for economic growth and development.⁴⁸ The impact is more pronounced for long-term investment because of the financial and material costs associated with these types of investments. Therefore, resolving conflict is vital for attracting private investment.

Inflation

According to the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) Economic and Management questionnaire,⁴⁹ sound macroeconomic policies is to be assessed against quantitative indicators such as average inflation over the last five years, real GDP growth rate, debt service ratio and fiscal deficit. In fact, in the vast body of development theoretical knowledge one element has been of a considerable longevity: the abstraction of a Gross Domestic Product to represent a given economic entity.⁵⁰ Inflation takes on an important role in this context given its far-reaching effects on the economy.⁵¹ High and variable inflation causes many distortions in the economy. More importantly, it discourages savings, as the future value of money is less worth than its present value.⁵²

Inflation also causes nominal interest rates to rise and this may affect demand for credit, thus affecting investment and economic growth negatively. It erodes the value of financial assets. Furthermore, investors become increasingly uncertain about the direction of economic policies in a highly inflationary environment.⁵³ This uncertainty may have an adverse effect on planned capital investment with negative effect on the wider economy. If sound macroeconomic policies that lead to economic development are to be sustained, African countries have to tackle the problem of inflation.

Fiscal Deficit

A related problem that also has profound implications for macroeconomic stability is high fiscal deficits. The fight against inflation is unlikely to be won if the fiscal deficit keeps rising. Large budget deficits and associated increases in inflation cause considerable uncertainty about the direction of government policies, and thus discourages both domestic and foreign private investment⁵⁴. Given the shallow nature of financial markets in Africa, government financing of large budget deficits leads to high interest rates, which crowds-out private investment⁵⁵.

The increase in interest rates associated with deficit financing puts pressure on the exchange rate and may erode the country's export competitiveness. Moreover, rising budget deficits raise government debt. Servicing this debt diverts resources away from critical social sectors such as health, education and infrastructure, which are of critical importance for private sector development. The increase in domestic debt may also raise the risk of default and reduce private sector confidence in the sustainability of the fiscal stance.

Corruption

Corruption, although a global problem, is particularly endemic in Africa⁵⁶. For example, 27 of the 45 African countries assessed (163 countries assessed overall) by the Transparency International Corruption Perception

⁴⁷World Bank, *Can Africa Claim the 21st Century?* Washington DC: The World Bank, 2000.

⁴⁸Gyimah-Brempong, K. and Traynor, T.L., "Political Instability, Investment and Economic Growth in Sub-Saharan Africa" 1999, *Journal of African Economies*, Vol. 8, Issue 1, 1999, Pp. 52-86.

⁴⁹"African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM): Guidelines for Countries to Prepare for and to Participate in the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM)". NEPAD Secretariat, 2003.

⁵⁰Daniel, S., "Working Papers on the Nature of Evidence: How Well Do 'Facts' Travel?" No. 33/08 Travelling with the GDP Through Early Development Economics' History. Retrieved June 10th, 2013 from <http://www.Ise.ac.uk/collection/economichistory/>

⁵¹Dornbusch, R. (1992), "Lessons from Experiences with High Inflation", *World Bank Economic Review*. Vol. 6. Pp. 13-31.

⁵²Hall, R., "Inflation, Causes and Effects" (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

⁵³Masimo, C. (2001) "Investment and the Persistence of Price Uncertainty", *Research in Economics*. Vol. 55, Pp. 189-217.

⁵⁴Bhattacharya, J., "Economic Brief: The fiscal deficit", Retrieved May 26th, 2013 from <http://www.macrosan.com/eco/aug02/eco170502FiscalDeficit.html> Deficits may not necessarily lead to inflation, especially if the economy is operating below full employment. In this case, larger budget deficits would be accompanied by increased demand and greater output.

⁵⁵See generally Pierre Richard, Agenor Peter and J. Montiel, "Development Macroeconomics". (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2008)

⁵⁶The Corruption Perception Index may not reflect the true state of corruption in any given country as it is based on people perception, which is inherently subjective.

Index was ranked amongst the bottom 100 of the index in 2006.⁵⁷ Corruption inhibits investment and economic growth.⁵⁸ In many African countries government officials demand kickbacks before granting licenses to potential investors. Investors view these kickbacks as illicit taxes and may be discouraged to undertake investment activities in countries where such practices are common.⁵⁹ In a survey conducted by the World Bank, for example, more than 75 percent of firms in Kenya reported that they had to pay bribes.⁶⁰

Modern Infrastructural Deficit

Infrastructure development in most African countries is poor or at best insufficient to accommodate the needs of foreign investors. The only notable exception is South Africa. Infrastructure, including power, telecommunication, transportation, water and sanitation is critical for economic growth and development.⁶¹ Indeed, they are important factors in attracting private investment.

Poor Implementation and Enforcement of Economic and Social Development Policies by Most African States
Though, UNECA has contributed in designing sound economic policies for the promotion of private sector development, the mobilization of resources and improvement of economic governance. It has facilitated an all-inclusive regional integration in African development by promoting the nexus between trade, industry, agriculture, land, infrastructure and investment and supporting African countries to boost intra-Africa trade and participate effectively in international trade. UNECA also, nurtures and harnesses new technologies and innovations to support African development and mechanisms for the effective management of Africa's natural resources.

More so, UNECA Promote mainstreaming of women (gender empowerment and gender equality) into national policies and programmes of member States using credible evidence and data. Develops and organizes training programs to improve public sector management centred on economic policy formulation, analysis, implementation, monitoring and evaluation to help improve and strengthen national visioning and development planning in member States. UNECA also works towards ensuring that the key policy findings of its research are used to support policy implementation at national, sub regional and continental levels by strengthening the capacity of member States, regional economic communities and AU to implement their development priorities. It has also advocated the mainstreaming of human development and concerns such as employment, population, social protection and youth issues into regional and national policies and strategies.⁶² But the big question yet to be answered is how effective have African States being in the implementation and enforcement of this policies? The obvious answer is that there is ineffective implementation and enforcement of these economic and social developmental policies on the part of most African States.

X. Conclusion

The dominant mode of historical reasoning seems to be the quest for "lessons" to be learned from the past in order to gain new directions for the future.⁶³ Despite the efforts made by the UNECA in synergy with other organizations towards the economic development of Africa, the major challenges remain: poverty is still

⁵⁷Transparency International, The 2006 Transparency International Corruption Perception Index. Retrieved May 26th, 2013 from www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0781359.html.

⁵⁸Mauro, P., (1995) "Effects of Corruption, Growth, Investment and Government Expenditure: A Cross-Country Analysis. Institute of International Economics". Retrieved May 20th, 2013 from <http://www.iie.com>

⁵⁹Sachs and Warner argue that resource-rich countries are more prone to rent-seeking behaviour than resource-poor countries. Sachs, J. and Warner, A. (1995) "Natural Resource Abundance and Economic Growth", NBER Working Papers 5398, Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.

⁶⁰World Bank, World Development Report 2005: A Better Investment Climate for Everyone, Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2005.

⁶¹ World Bank, "Can Africa Claim the 21st Century?" (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2000).

⁶²ECA New Strategic Directions for the Transformative Development of Africa – A Note Delivered by the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa at the Thirty-second meeting of the Committee of Experts of the Sixth Joint Annual Meetings of the ECA Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development and AU Conference of Ministers of Economy and Finance held in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire on the 21-24 March, 2013.

⁶³Thorbecke, E. "The Evolution of the Development Doctrine and the Role of Foreign Aid, 1950-2000", in "Foreign Aid and Development. Lessons Learnt and Directions for the Future," Finn T., (Ed) (London, 2000).

widespread, famine and food insecurity affect many, violent conflicts persists in certain areas, youth unemployment is high and climate change poses a growing threat to long-term development prospects.⁶⁴

The world is changing, Africa is changing and UNECA must change, if it is to meet continental priorities. The changes in the world include a new phase of globalization in terms of accelerated economic integration and social development driven by the phenomenal growth of information and communication technology (ICT) due to increases in digital processing power and its multimedia applications.⁶⁵

The unfavorable investment climate in many African state results from poor governance, political instability, institutional failures, macroeconomic policy imperfections, inadequate infrastructure, rampant corruption and a lack of transparency in government departments. These and other factors have made it difficult for the continent to attract foreign capital and mobilize adequate and sustained levels of domestic private investment to attain the levels of growth necessary for massive job creation and poverty reduction.

Achieving higher levels of economic and social development in African countries is subject to an improvement in the macroeconomic environment, combined with an improvement in public infrastructure, good governance underpinned by strong and functional institutions and ensuring food and nutritional security alongside viable social policies. While UNECA'S development policies should put "Africa First", it would also mean continued close collaboration among the three Pan-African institutions, namely African Development Bank (AfDB), African Union (AU) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) to ensure coherence and synergy in the economic and social development of Africa.

XI. Recommendations

To meet the current economic needs of the African continent UNECA should work in collaboration with the African Union (AU), African Development Bank (AfDB), Civil Societies and relevant Non Governmental Organizations (NGO'S) within Africa to:

1. Ensure good governance so as to avoid political instability and achieve the stability of the polity.
2. Encourage integrity in financial dealings and management which will in turn reduce inflation and budget deficit.
3. Engage in massive up-to-date and modern infrastructural development so as to attract private and direct investment.
4. Ensure the full and effective implementation and enforcement of its economic and social developmental policies.
5. Address and eliminate the destructive monster called 'corruption' in Africa.

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