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## Economic Commission for Africa Background Guide 2023

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Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 2023 National Model United Nations New York Conference (NMUN•NY)! We are pleased to introduce you to our committee, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). The topics under discussion are:

1. Promoting Sustainable and Resilient Food Systems in Africa in Times of Crises
2. Mainstreaming Human Rights Throughout the African Continental Free Trade Area

Members of our dais this year include:

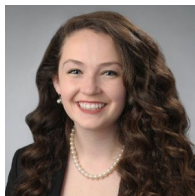


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This Background Guide serves as an introduction to the topics for this committee. However, it is not intended to replace individual research. We encourage you to explore your Member State's policies in depth and use the Annotated Bibliography and Bibliography to further your knowledge on these topics. In preparation for the Conference, each delegation will submit a Position Paper by 11:59 p.m. (Eastern Time) on 1 March 2023 in accordance with the guidelines in the [Position Paper Guide](#) and the NMUN•NY [Position Papers website](#).

Two resources, available to download from the [NMUN website](#), serve as essential instruments in preparing for the Conference and as a reference during committee sessions:

1. [NMUN Delegate Preparation Guide](#) - explains each step in the delegate process, from pre-Conference research to the committee debate and resolution drafting processes. Please take note of the information on plagiarism, and the prohibition on pre-written working papers and resolutions. Delegates should not start discussion on the topics with other members of their committee until the first committee session.
2. [NMUN Rules of Procedure](#) - include the long and short form of the rules, as well as an explanatory narrative and example script of the flow of procedure.

In addition, please review the mandatory [NMUN Conduct Expectations](#) on the NMUN website. They include the Conference dress code and other expectations of all attendees. We want to emphasize that any instances of sexual harassment or discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, age, or disability will not be tolerated. If you have any questions concerning your preparation for this committee, please contact the Economic and Social Council Department, Caitlin M Hopper (Conference A), at [usg.ecosoc@nmun.org](mailto:usg.ecosoc@nmun.org).

We wish you all the best in your preparations and look forward to seeing you at the Conference!

Nour Abd Eldayem, Director  
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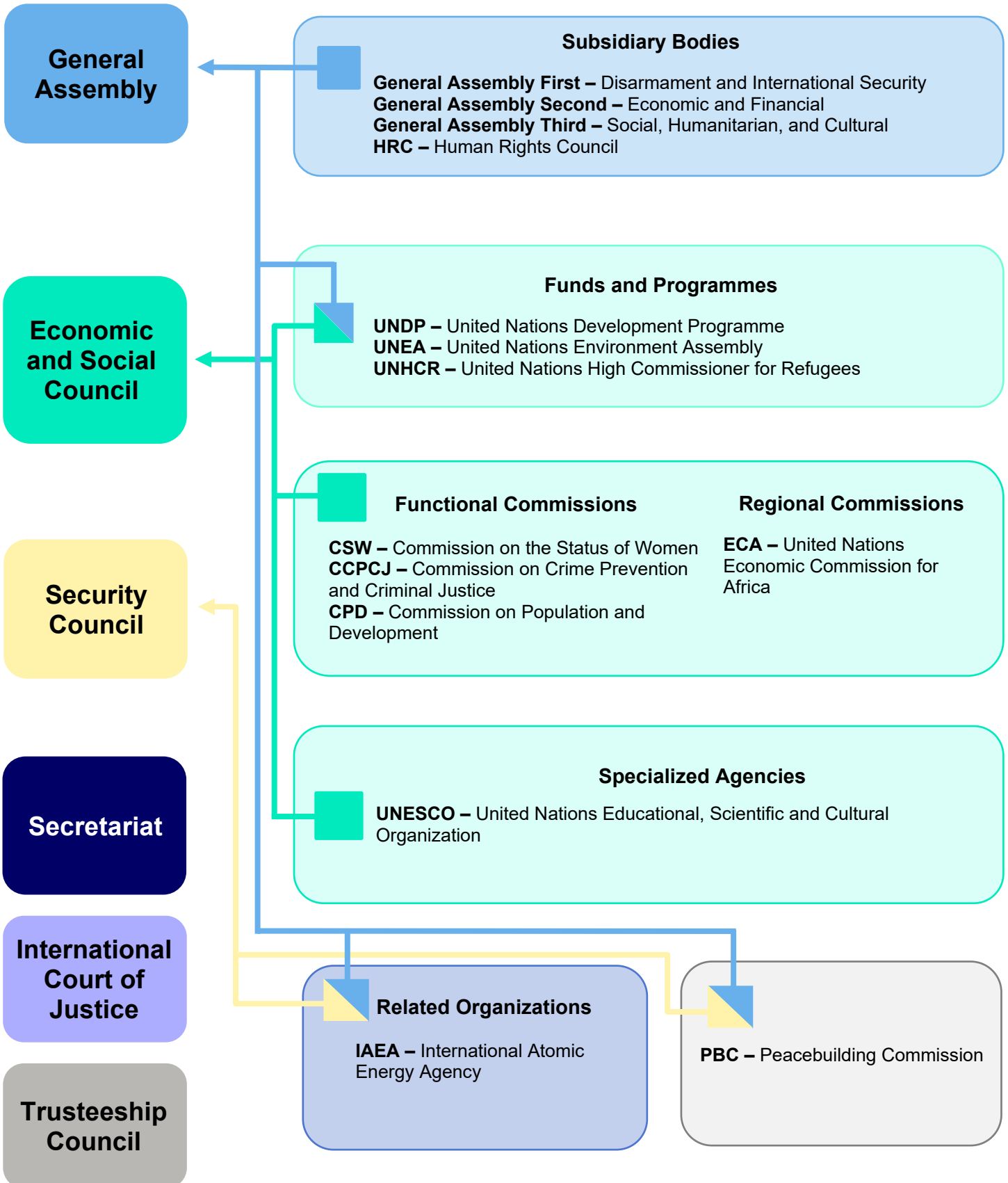
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## United Nations System at NMUN•NY

This diagram illustrates the UN system simulated at NMUN•NY. It shows where each committee “sits” within the system to demonstrate the reportage and relationships between entities. Examine the diagram alongside the Committee Overview to gain a clear picture of the committee’s position, purpose, and powers within the UN system.



## Committee Overview

### **Introduction**

The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) was established in 1958 as one of the five regional commissions of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).<sup>1</sup> The commission brings together Member States, regional bodies, development banks, and other stakeholders within the region in order to address socio-economic related issues across the African continent.<sup>2</sup> One of the core functions of ECA is to work to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).<sup>3</sup> The ECA furthers these goals by creating a platform where relevant stakeholders can convene in order to discuss and solve pressing challenges faced within the African continent, conduct research on sustainable development, and provide policy advice to Member States on an as needed basis in collaboration with the larger United Nations (UN) system.<sup>4</sup>

### **Mandate, Functions, and Powers**

ECA entails different activities such as advocacy and policy analysis to generate knowledge, assemble stakeholders to share experiences, agree on common strategies, and supply Member States with technical assistance concerning national capacity-building.<sup>5</sup> Its mandate provides ECA with unique power as it plays a key advisory role on both regional and sub-regional levels.<sup>6</sup> According to ECOSOC, ECA engages, inter alia, in investigations and research on economic and technological issues, provides technical assistance, advises Member States on policies to improve economic and technological development, initiates measures to enhance economic growth in Africa connected with social aspects, and supplies African countries with advisory services.<sup>7</sup> The core topics of ECA are related to economic and social development in African countries.<sup>8</sup> These topics are organized into nine thematic groups which include: macroeconomic policy and governance, private sector development and finance, data and statistics, technology climate change and natural resource management, poverty inequality and social policy, economic development and planning, gender equality and empowerment of women, regional integration and trade, and sub-regional activities for development.<sup>9</sup>

Whilst the following list is not exhaustive, ECA's mandate can be summarized as:

- **ECA will generally:** provide a dedicated platform for Member States and regional stakeholders to develop cohesive continent-wide development policies; conduct expert research in areas of sustainable development, social policies, and innovation; track economic data and performance; provide policy advice as requested by Member States; advocate Africa's position on a global level.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa. *About Us*. n.d.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa. *Africa Sustainable Development Goal Progress Report*. 2021.

<sup>4</sup> United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa. *About Us*. n.d.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa. *Activities of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa on International Migration: Follow-up to the 2006 High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development*. 2008.

<sup>7</sup> United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure of the Economic Commission for Africa (E/CN.14/III/Rev.8/Corr.2)*. 1994.

<sup>8</sup> United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa. *Africa Sustainable Development Goal Progress Report*. 2021.

<sup>9</sup> United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa. *Our Work*. n.d.

<sup>10</sup> Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data. *ECA – United Nations Economic Commission for Africa*. 2022; United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa. *Annual Report*. 2019. p. 12; United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa. *Africa's quarterly economic performance and outlook*. 2021.

- **ECA will not generally:** direct Member States, NGO's, regional institutions, and other UN bodies to implement specific actions, as the commission serves primarily in an advisory and research capacity.<sup>11</sup>

It is important to note that while ECA works closely with institutions such as the African Union (AU) and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), they are *not* the same.<sup>12</sup> AU and NEPAD work primarily on a regional and sub-regional level, while ECA represents the interests and needs of the African region on the international stage.<sup>13</sup> ECA works to advance AU's work on political and socio-economic integration of Africa through advocating Member States' positions, publishing reports, and creating conditions that allow African countries to play a significant role within the global economy.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, ECA plays a leadership role in working with NEPAD to eradicate poverty in the region, diminish marginalization of Africa in the globalization process, empower women and integrate African economy into the globalized world.<sup>15</sup>

### **Governance, Funding, and Structure**

The commission comprises 54 Member States.<sup>16</sup> It is led by an Executive Secretary, and receives assistance from two Deputy Executive Secretaries.<sup>17</sup> As a regional commission within the UN system, ECA reports annually to ECOSOC regarding its work plans and activities of its subsidiary bodies.<sup>18</sup> The work of the programme is focused on two pillars which are knowledge generation and knowledge delivery.<sup>19</sup> Five substantive divisions of ECA are responsible for carrying out policy research: the African Centre for Statistics, the Capacity Development Division, African Institute for Economic Development and Planning, the Division of Administration, and ECA's Sub-regional Offices (SROs).<sup>20</sup> SROs play a crucial role connecting the UN system and ECA on one side, and the Member States and regional economic communities on the other side.<sup>21</sup> SROs act on the sub-regional level, which enables them to acquire specific knowledge about the region's unique characteristics and necessities.<sup>22</sup>

The administration of ECA is financed directly through the annual UN budget.<sup>23</sup> ECA receives additional streams of funding from donor Member States and the private sector, which normally are directed towards specific programs or issue areas.<sup>24</sup> Additionally, ECA recognizes that private sector as well as cooperating regional partners are required in order to advance the continent's continued development.<sup>25</sup> For this purpose, ECA's Partnerships Office and the Joint Secretariat Support Office were created and partner with organizations such as the African Union Commission and African Development Bank.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa. *About Us*. n.d.

<sup>12</sup> United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa. *Activities of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa on International Migration: Follow-up to the 2006 High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development*. 2008.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa. *About Us*. n.d.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure of the Economic Commission for Africa (E/CN.14/III/Rev.8/Corr.2)*. 1994.

<sup>19</sup> Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data. *ECA – United Nations Economic Commission for Africa*. 2022.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. *Annual Report*. 2019.

<sup>22</sup> United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. *Subregional Offices*. n.d.

<sup>23</sup> United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure of the Economic Commission for Africa (E/CN.14/III/Rev.8/Corr.2)*. 1994.

<sup>24</sup> Browne et al. *How Relevant are the UN's Regional Commissions?* 2013. p. 2.

<sup>25</sup> United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa. *Joint Secretariat Support Office to strengthen common positions on climate change and infrastructure development*. 2011.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

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[https://www.uneca.org/sites/default/files/public/eca-terms-of-reference-and-rules-of-procedure-1994\\_en\\_print.pdf](https://www.uneca.org/sites/default/files/public/eca-terms-of-reference-and-rules-of-procedure-1994_en_print.pdf)

*This document serves as a comprehensive source for all technical information regarding ECA. It defines everything from sessions, membership within the commission to voting. Additionally, the guide explains ECA's subsidiary bodies, as well as how the commission interacts with a variety of stakeholders including Member States, liberation armies and NGOs. This source will help delegates to get a good understanding of the working of ECA.*

United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa. *Activities of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa on International Migration: Follow-up to the 2006 High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development*. 2008. Retrieved 6 November 2022 from:

[https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/sites/www.un.org.development.desa.pd/files/unpd-cm7-2008-11\\_p01\\_eca.pdf](https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/sites/www.un.org.development.desa.pd/files/unpd-cm7-2008-11_p01_eca.pdf)

*In 2006, ECA went through a reform process as part of the overall reformation of the UN. This report discusses the challenges that guided the reform process and how these changes have influenced the work of ECA. Furthermore, the partners of ECA and the work with them is discussed. Delegates can use this source to get an understanding of how the work of ECA developed throughout this process.*

United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa. *Annual Report*. 2019. Retrieved 27 October 2022 from:

[https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3840097/files/E\\_2019\\_38-EN.pdf?ln=en](https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3840097/files/E_2019_38-EN.pdf?ln=en)

*The annual report provides detailed information concerning economic and social issues in Africa. The report serves as a timeline of actions that were undertaken by the commission on a plethora of issues related to its mandate over the year. Additionally, the report highlights the specific resolutions that the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development voted on that were brought to the attention of ECOSOC. This resource serves as a real world application of ECAs mandate and will give delegates a good understanding of how ECA operates.*

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Browne et al. *How Relevant Are the UN's Regional Commissions?* 2013. Retrieved 27 October 2022

from: [https://futureun.org/media/archive1/briefings/FUNDS\\_Brief1.pdf](https://futureun.org/media/archive1/briefings/FUNDS_Brief1.pdf)

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<https://www.data4sdgs.org/partner/eca-united-nations-economic-commission-africa>

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[https://www.uneca.org/sites/default/files/public/eca-terms-of-reference-and-rules-of-procedure-1994\\_en\\_print.pdf](https://www.uneca.org/sites/default/files/public/eca-terms-of-reference-and-rules-of-procedure-1994_en_print.pdf)

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[https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/sites/www.un.org.development.desa.pd/files/unpd-cm7-2008-11\\_p01\\_eca.pdf](https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/sites/www.un.org.development.desa.pd/files/unpd-cm7-2008-11_p01_eca.pdf)

United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. *Joint Secretariat Support Office to strengthen common positions on climate change and infrastructure development*. 2011. Retrieved 27 October 2022 from:

<https://repository.uneca.org/bitstream/handle/10855/33070/b10818455.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>



United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa. *Annual Report 2019 (E/2019/38)*. 2019. Retrieved 27 October 2022 from: <https://undocs.org/en/E/2019/38>

United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa. *Africa Sustainable Development Goal Progress Report*. 2021. Retrieved 27 October 2022 from: <https://repository.uneca.org/handle/10855/48607>

United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa. *Africa's quarterly economic performance and outlook*. 2021. Retrieved 28 October 2022 from: <https://repository.uneca.org/bitstream/handle/10855/46637/b11998052.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

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United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa. *Subregional Offices*. n.d. Retrieved 27 October 2022 from: <https://www.uneca.org/subregional-offices>

United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. *Our Work*. n.d. Retrieved 27 October 2022 from: <https://www.uneca.org/our-work>



# 1. Promoting Sustainable and Resilient Food Systems in Africa in Times of Crises

## Introduction

Due to several major crises, namely the COVID-19 pandemic, extreme weather conditions, and conflict, African communities continue to face rising food commodity prices, supply chain issues, and food and raw material shortages.<sup>27</sup> This, in turn, has led to a decline in food security in Africa.<sup>28</sup> Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of people facing hunger globally significantly increased.<sup>29</sup> There are large regional disparities, with Africa having the highest per capita rate of malnourishment.<sup>30</sup> According to the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), African states are especially vulnerable to shocks introduced by major crises due to their reliance on food imports.<sup>31</sup> For example, as many as 25 African countries depend on Russia and Ukraine for a third of their wheat supply and fertilizer to boost their agricultural production and have been significantly impacted by the war in Ukraine.<sup>32</sup> Additionally, due to climate change, many regions in Africa are facing multi-year droughts and floods.<sup>33</sup> In the Horn of Africa, 10.7 million people are facing severe hunger due to two year-long droughts.<sup>34</sup> Excessive rain and resulting floods have destroyed farmland and displaced approximately 378,000 people in West and Central Africa in 2021.<sup>35</sup>

The development of more resilient and sustainable food systems can increase African communities' capacity to combat the repercussions of current and future crises.<sup>36</sup> According to the High-Level Task Force on Global Food and Nutrition Security, sustainable food systems are defined as systems which consider environmental, social, and institutional factors in the development of the agricultural value chain.<sup>37</sup> The agricultural value chain includes areas such as food production, processing, distribution, marketing, and consumption of food.<sup>38</sup> Resilience in food systems refers to the capacity of food systems to provide sufficient food to all, despite unforeseen shocks.<sup>39</sup> Food crises tend to disproportionately affect vulnerable groups.<sup>40</sup> Extreme weather events push vulnerable households even deeper into crises, exacerbating food insecurity in already fragile regions.<sup>41</sup> When working to alleviate the effects of crises on

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<sup>27</sup> United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *World Economic Situation and Prospects 2022*. 2022; United Nations Global Crisis Response Group on Food, Energy and Finance. *Global impact of the war in Ukraine: Billions of people face the greatest cost-of-living crisis in a generation*. 2022.

<sup>28</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations et al. *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World: Repurposing food and agricultural policies to make healthy diets more affordable*. 2022.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. p. xiv.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa. *Addressing poverty and vulnerability in Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic: Economic Report on Africa*. 2021.

<sup>32</sup> United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. *The impact on trade and development of the war in Ukraine*. 2022; Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *The Importance of Ukraine and the Russian Federation for Global Agricultural Markets and the Risks Associated with the War in Ukraine*. 2022. p. 1.

<sup>33</sup> Global Network Against Food Crises et al. *2022 Global Report on Food Crises: Joint Analysis for Better Decisions*. 2022.

<sup>34</sup> Oxfam International. *Drought in East Africa: "If the rains do not come, none of us will survive"*. 2022.

<sup>35</sup> United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. *West and Central Africa: Flooding Situation Overview (January - December 2021) - As of 10 March 2022*. 2022.

<sup>36</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *Resilient food systems: A proposed analytical strategy for empirical applications*. 2021. p. 3.

<sup>37</sup> United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Task Force on Global Food and Nutrition Security. *The Zero Hunger Challenge - Advisory Note for Action All Food Systems are Sustainable*. n.d.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.; Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *Sustainable food systems: Concept and framework*. 2018.

<sup>39</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *Resilient food systems: A proposed analytical strategy for empirical applications*. 2021. p. 3

<sup>40</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations et al. *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World: Repurposing food and agricultural policies to make healthy diets more affordable*. 2022. p. xvii.

<sup>41</sup> United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. *West and Central Africa: Flooding Situation Overview (January - December 2021) - As of 10 March 2022*. 2022.

African communities, particularly vulnerable groups, ECA develops policy recommendations, innovative financing models, and the use of technological solutions for regional integration.<sup>42</sup>

### ***International and Regional Framework***

Article 25 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948) and Article 11 of the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (1966) recognize the right to food as an integral part of the right to adequate living conditions.<sup>43</sup> The Commission on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) expanded on the right to food in *CESCR General Comment No. 12* (1999), outlining what the right to food entails and what obligations Member States have towards ensuring adequate access to food.<sup>44</sup> The relationship between hunger, malnutrition, and human rights was reexamined with the adoption of the *Universal Declaration on the Eradication of Hunger and Malnutrition* (1974) by the World Food Conference, which outlined measures such as enhancing international trade and developing policies focused on food systems transformation to decrease malnutrition rates globally.<sup>45</sup>

The *Rome Declaration on World Food Security* (1996), adopted during the World Food Summit, identified poverty, conflict, and environmental degradation as some major challenges to achieving food security for all.<sup>46</sup> It was followed by the *2009 Rome Declaration on World Food Security*, in which Member States committed to a “twin-track approach” of addressing both immediate challenges faced by the most vulnerable and developing longer-term strategies for sustainable food security.<sup>47</sup> Shortly after its establishment by the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General, the High-Level Task Force on Global Food and Nutrition Security produced its *Comprehensive Framework for Action* (CFA) (2008) and the *Updated CFA* (2010), which cover all aspects of nutrition and food security, and outline meeting immediate needs and building resilience in the long-term as their two primary areas of work.<sup>48</sup> The *Rome Declaration on Nutrition* (2014) was adopted during the Second International Conference on Nutrition, in which participating states committed to several actions, including increasing investments to improve access to adequate food and focusing on empowering consumers for more sustainable consumption patterns.<sup>49</sup>

The *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2030 Agenda) established by General Assembly resolution 70/1 (2015) adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which, amongst others, set the goal to achieve zero hunger through greater agricultural productivity gains and sustainable food production systems, more prominently through the transformation of food systems.<sup>50</sup> Beyond SDG 2 (zero hunger), the achievement of many SDGs, such as SDG 7 (affordable and clean energy), SDG 14 (life below water), and SDG 15 (life on land) relies partly on the successful development of sustainable and resilient food systems.<sup>51</sup> With the adoption of the *Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development* (2015), Member States committed to increasing public investment in technologies, research, and infrastructure to augment food security.<sup>52</sup> The *Milan*

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<sup>42</sup> United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa. *About Us*. n.d.

<sup>43</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*. 1948; United Nations, General Assembly. *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (A/RES/2200 (XXI))*. 1966.

<sup>44</sup> United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights General Comment No. 12: The right to adequate food (Art. 11) (E/C.12/1999/5)*. 1999.

<sup>45</sup> United Nations, World Food Conference. *Report of the World Food Conference (E/CONF.65/20)*. 1974. pp. 1-3.

<sup>46</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *Rome Declaration and the World Food Summit Plan of Action*. 1996.

<sup>47</sup> World Summit on Food Security. *Declaration of the World Summit on Food Security*. 2009.

<sup>48</sup> United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Task Force on Global Food and Nutrition Security. *Comprehensive Framework for Action*. 2008; United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Task Force on Global Food and Nutrition Security. *Updated Comprehensive Framework for Action*. 2010.

<sup>49</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations et al. *Conference Outcome Document: Rome Declaration on Nutrition (ICN2 2014/2)*. 2014.

<sup>50</sup> United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Goal 2: Zero Hunger*. n.d.

<sup>51</sup> United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Food Systems Summit x SDGs*. n.d.

<sup>52</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (Addis Ababa Action Agenda) (A/RES/69/313)*. 2015.

*Declaration on Enhancing Food Security and Climate Adaptation in Small Island Developing States* (2015) further highlighted the importance of multilateral trading systems and regional knowledge exchange to develop climate resilient and sustainable agricultural practices.<sup>53</sup>

The African Union (AU) adopted the *Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme* (CAADP) in 2003, which aims to promote agricultural innovations and advances in productivity to ensure food security.<sup>54</sup> In 2014, the AU adopted the *Malabo Declaration on the Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods* in which it recommits to the CAADP and calls for increased investments in agriculture, improved intra-African trade, and production systems more resilient to climate variability by 2025.<sup>55</sup> AU's *African Continental Free Trade Agreement* (2012) (AfCFTA) provides the foundational framework for greater economic integration on the African continent.<sup>56</sup> It establishes a new African free trade area to promote a single African market, foster industrial development, and enhance food security on a continental level through productivity gains and increases in the resilience of food systems.<sup>57</sup> As a part of the *50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration* (2013), the AU adopted *Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want* confirming the AU's commitment to promoting high living standards and well-being of Africans through a focus on the reduction of hunger and increased agricultural productivity.<sup>58</sup>

### **Role of the International System**

ECA has consistently examined the effects of recent crises on food security in Africa.<sup>59</sup> With the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, ECA published the report *COVID-19 lockdown exit strategies for Africa* (2020), highlighting the effects of COVID-19 on food security and economic growth, and outlining ways to address the consequences of COVID-19 on intra-African trade and agricultural projects.<sup>60</sup> In 2021, ECA co-published the report *Africa – Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition 2021: Statistics and Trends* (2021) and the *2021 Economic Report on Africa*, both of which discuss the ongoing state of food security in Africa and potential strategies to mitigate the consequences of major crises, such as extreme weather and the war in Ukraine.<sup>61</sup>

With a focus on increasing African agriculture productivity to curb the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the AU jointly published the *Framework for Boosting Intra-African Trade in Agricultural Commodities and Services* (2021) which calls for facilitation of trade and access to investments in agri-food industries.<sup>62</sup> Through a detailed assessment of food insecurity globally, the annual *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World* report examines the progress made by the international community in eradicating hunger, malnutrition, and food

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<sup>53</sup> Ministerial Meeting on Enhancing Food Security and Climate Adaptation in Small Island Developing States. *Milan Declaration on Enhancing Food Security and Climate Adaptation in Small Island Developing States, in the framework of the SAMOA Pathway*. 2015.

<sup>54</sup> African Union Development Agency. *Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP)*. 2022.

<sup>55</sup> African Union. *Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods*. 2014.

<sup>56</sup> African Union. *Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area*. 2012.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.; European Commission. *Potential effects of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) on African agri-food sectors and food security*. n.d.

<sup>58</sup> African Union. *Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want*. 2015; African Union. *Goals & Priority Areas of Agenda 2063*. n.d.

<sup>59</sup> United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa. *COVID-19 lockdown exit strategies for Africa*. 2020; United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa. *Seventh session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development: summary, key messages and Brazzaville Declaration (ECA/RFSD/2021/15)*. 2021; Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *Africa Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition 2021: Statistics and Trends*. 2021; United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa. *Addressing poverty and vulnerability in Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic: Economic Report on Africa*. 2021.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations et al. *Framework for Boosting Intra-African Trade in Agricultural Commodities and Services*. 2021.

insecurity.<sup>63</sup> In response to many of the current crises, the World Food Programme (WFP) prioritizes the delivery of cash-based and in-kind food assistance to stabilize food supply chains and support national food systems in Africa.<sup>64</sup> To complement its food assistance efforts, WFP launches initiatives such as the WFP Innovation Hub for Eastern Africa and its integrated resilience program in the Sahel to foster innovation in the development of resilient agri-food systems.<sup>65</sup> Additionally, WFP publishes its annual *Global Report on Food Crises* in which it examines the main drivers of food insecurity.<sup>66</sup>

Discussions during the 2020 session of the FAO Regional Conference for Africa covered the importance of establishing resilient food systems in the context of climate change, conflicts, economic downturns, and COVID-19.<sup>67</sup> Accordingly, FAO prioritized maximizing the use of the FAO Digital Portfolio for better data collection and dissemination.<sup>68</sup> Efforts integrating the use and sharing of data enable better responses to current and future crises and strengthens the work of other FAO projects, such as the Hand-in-Hand Initiative, which supports national agri-food systems transformation programs.<sup>69</sup>

Under the theme “Building forward better: Towards a resilient and green Africa to achieve the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063,” participants in the 2021 Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development expressed the importance of aligning national food strategies with the AfCFTA and making food systems more sustainable through efforts including investments in digitalization efforts.<sup>70</sup> To support the aforementioned efforts, FAO launched the Regional Technical Platform for Common Agricultural Practices to allow stakeholders to share knowledge and best practices for stronger regional agricultural value chains and sustainable mechanization of agricultural practices.<sup>71</sup>

The United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS), convened in 2021 by the UN Secretary-General, prompted discussions on the role sustainable, resilient, and equitable food systems play in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.<sup>72</sup> Participants in the UNFSS discussed nutrition, sustainable consumption, nature-positive production, food systems resilience, and equity in livelihoods.<sup>73</sup> In preparation for the summit, the AU, with technical support from ECA, published the *African Common Position on Food Systems* (2021), providing a synthesis of African Member States’ priorities regarding the development of sustainable food systems.<sup>74</sup> Since the 2021 UNFSS, the General Assembly has adopted several pertinent resolutions, including resolution 76/222 on “Agriculture Development, Food Security and Nutrition,” which highlights the importance of decreasing exposure of African countries to global shocks through multilateral trading and cooperation, and calls for the implementation of the UNFSS recommendations.<sup>75</sup>

Several non-governmental organizations (NGOs), such as the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), CGIAR, and the International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems contribute

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<sup>63</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations et al. *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World: Repurposing food and agricultural policies to make healthy diets more affordable*. 2022.

<sup>64</sup> United Nations, World Food Programme. *War in Ukraine drives global food crisis*. 2022.

<sup>65</sup> United Nations, World Food Programme. *Eastern Africa: WFP Innovation Hub for Eastern Africa*. 2020; Tumbrink et al. United Nations, World Food Programme. *Greening the Sahel*. 2022.

<sup>66</sup> Global Network Against Food Crises et al. *2022 Global Report on Food Crises: Joint Analysis for Better Decisions*. 2022.

<sup>67</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *FAO Regional Conference for Africa (ARC)*. 2022.

<sup>68</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *Priorities for FAO in the Region under the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31*. 2022.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.; Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *Hand-in-Hand Initiative*. 2022.

<sup>70</sup> United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa. *Seventh session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development: summary, key messages and Brazzaville Declaration (ECA/RFSD/2021/15)*. 2021.

<sup>71</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *Regional Technical Platform for Common Agricultural Practices*. 2022.

<sup>72</sup> United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *About the Summit*. n.d.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.; Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *Sustainable food systems: Concept and framework*. 2018.

<sup>74</sup> African Union Development Agency. *Africa Common Position on Food Systems*. 2021.

<sup>75</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Agriculture development, food security and nutrition (A/RES/76/222)*. 2022.



to global discussions on food systems through policy recommendations, research initiatives, and cooperation with other stakeholders to share knowledge and expertise, thus promoting the establishment of sustainable food systems in Africa.<sup>76</sup> In a similar capacity, the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) leverages its partnerships with other NGOs and research institutions to provide African leaders with food systems data and inform food policies in the region.<sup>77</sup>

### ***The Disproportionate Effects of Food Crises on Vulnerable Groups***

According to WFP's *Global Food Crises Report 2022*, the three main drivers of acute food insecurity, namely conflict, COVID-19, and climate extremes, left 193 million people in 53 Member States facing chronic malnutrition, with the adverse effects felt mostly by vulnerable groups.<sup>78</sup> Of those 53 Member States, nearly half are located in Africa.<sup>79</sup> Vulnerable groups are those populations that are more likely to experience inequality and discrimination, often on a structural level, including women, children, internally displaced persons and refugees, ethnic and religious minorities, and indigenous peoples.<sup>80</sup> Vulnerable groups are particularly at risk during times of crisis due to increased experiences of discrimination and exclusion, violence, a lack of agency, and limited access to resources and markets.<sup>81</sup>

The war in Ukraine has highlighted the interconnectedness of worldwide food supply; the war is impacting not only those directly affected, but is also felt globally as many communities rely on imports of food staples and fertilizers from Ukraine and the Russian Federation.<sup>82</sup> To illustrate, according to the *2022 Rapid Gender Analysis* jointly prepared by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and Care International, the war in Ukraine continues to leave female-headed households 11% more food insecure than male-headed households amid shortages in food and water.<sup>83</sup>

The effects of crises are unique to each African region and type of crisis, nonetheless, vulnerable groups continue to face immense hardship especially due to the compounded effects of COVID-19 and extreme droughts.<sup>84</sup> According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), 15 million people in the Horn of Africa are at risk of food insecurity due to extreme droughts.<sup>85</sup> While an increase in extreme weather events has reduced the amount of food available, the COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to the rising costs of food.<sup>86</sup> Prices of food commodities have increased between 30% and 50% on average in many areas in the Sahel and West Africa region, according to WFP, with the number of food insecure people increasing four-fold between 2019 and 2022.<sup>87</sup> Other than the direct adverse effects of food crises on vulnerable groups in Africa, crises trigger unfavorable coping strategies within affected communities, such

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<sup>76</sup> CGIAR. *Home*. n.d.; International Food Policy Research Institute. *About IFPRI*. 2022.

<sup>77</sup> Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition et al. *Food Systems Dashboard*. 2022; Sokourenko et al. *Progress in African Food Systems: What do the Data Say?* 2022.

<sup>78</sup> Global Network Against Food Crises et al. *2022 Global Report on Food Crises: Joint Analysis for Better Decisions*. 2022. p. 8

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.* p. 3.

<sup>80</sup> United Nations Development Programme. *Vulnerable and key populations*. 2021; International Organization for Migration. *Glossary on Migration*. 2022. p. 230.

<sup>81</sup> World Bank Group. *Gender Strategy: Gender Equality, Poverty Reduction, and Inclusive Growth*. 2015. pp. 15-18.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.* p. 11

<sup>83</sup> United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Rapid gender analysis in Ukraine reveals different impacts and needs of women and men*. 2022.

<sup>84</sup> Global Network Against Food Crises et al. *2022 Global Report on Food Crises: Joint Analysis for Better Decisions*. 2022. pp. 8, 26.

<sup>85</sup> International Organization for Migration. *15 Million People Face Humanitarian Crisis Due to Drought in the Horn of Africa*. 2022.

<sup>86</sup> Global Network Against Food Crises et al. *2022 Global Report on Food Crises: Joint Analysis for Better Decisions*. 2022. p. 11.

<sup>87</sup> United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Sub-Saharan Africa under threat from multiple humanitarian crises*. 2022.

as increased prevalence of child marriages and child labor, reduced expenditure on health, education and productive assets, and violence against and exploitation of women and children.<sup>88</sup>

Several factors exacerbate the breakdown of food systems in times of crises.<sup>89</sup> Droughts continue to weaken harvests for many farmers, and because women often hold a significant portion of positions such as smallholder farming and water collection, extreme weather events tend to expose them to higher risk of livelihood disruption.<sup>90</sup> This process is two-fold in its effects; higher exposure leads to a higher occurrence of damages, but existing barriers lead to diminished capacity for recovery efforts.<sup>91</sup> In turn, this leads to greater inequality as losses accumulate.<sup>92</sup> Many women further face hardships in gaining access to markets and financing needed to withstand crises that affect their practices.<sup>93</sup> For example, a 2021 World Bank report titled *Women in Agriculture Using Digital Financial Services* noted during market research that women in East Africa face a number of barriers that their male counterparts do not, including lower quality and less profitable agricultural inputs, more limited technological access, and a lack of financial products that take into account the needs of women.<sup>94</sup>

For many Member States, the COVID-19 pandemic served as a stark reminder of the challenges in addressing the particular needs of vulnerable groups, especially in access to natural resources, markets, credit, and adequate social relief programs.<sup>95</sup> In its 60<sup>th</sup> session, speakers in the Commission on Social Development discussed the importance of developing resilient food systems, especially in the agriculture and fisheries sectors, during times of crisis.<sup>96</sup> The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) cites value chain investments, such as micro financing and investment in market access innovations, and training and subsidies for agricultural projects as interventions likely to soften the impact of crises on food systems and thus strengthening their resilience.<sup>97</sup> Similarly, through its Facility for Refugees, Migrants, Forced Displacement and Rural Stability (FARMS), IFAD works to develop food markets, reduce harvest losses, and increase livelihood opportunities for refugees and their host countries in agriculture.<sup>98</sup>

Numerous efforts have been introduced by the international community to combat the effects of crises on food systems, but many underlying issues diminish the effectiveness of these projects.<sup>99</sup> Hindrances include lack of data on persons that need the most support, disrupted food supply chains, decline in external demand, lack of sufficient resources, rising food prices, and underrepresentation in discussions pertinent to the development of food systems.<sup>100</sup> According to IFAD, small-scale producers are facing

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<sup>88</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Nine out of ten Syrian refugee families in Lebanon are now living in extreme poverty, UN study says*. 2020.

<sup>89</sup> Global Network Against Food Crises et al. *2022 Global Report on Food Crises: Joint Analysis for Better Decisions*. 2022. p. 11.

<sup>90</sup> United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Sub-Saharan Africa under threat from multiple humanitarian crises*. 2022; United Nations, General Assembly. *Food systems and human rights - Interim report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food (A/76/237)*. 2021.

<sup>91</sup> Izlam et al. United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Climate Change and Social Inequality (ST/ESA/2017/DWP/152)*. 2017. pp. 5-7.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid. pp. 5-7.

<sup>93</sup> Mokoena et al. *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs. Climate Change's Disproportionate Impact on Women: Agricultural Workers in South Africa*. 2020.

<sup>94</sup> Varangis et al. *Women in Agriculture Using Digital Financial Services: Lessons Learned from Technical Assistance Support to DigiFarm, Fenix, and myAgro*. 2021. p. 12.

<sup>95</sup> United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Speakers Call for Inclusive Food Systems, Digital Upgrades to Reach World's Most In-Need, as Social Development Commission Caps First Week of Session*. 2022.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> International Fund for Agricultural Development. *Impacts of Ukraine conflict on food security already being felt in the Near East North Africa region and will quickly spread, warns IFAD*. 2022.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Food systems and human rights - Interim report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food (A/76/237)*. 2021.

<sup>100</sup> United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Speakers Call for Inclusive Food Systems, Digital Upgrades to Reach World's Most In-Need, as Social Development Commission Caps First Week of Session*.

immense risk due to COVID-19, droughts, and other natural disasters, leading to rising raw material costs, reduced supplies of food, and overall market disruption.<sup>101</sup> In many locations, vulnerable groups have been unable to inform conversations on climate impact, leaving them more at risk to the adverse effects of climate crises on their communities.<sup>102</sup>

### ***Harnessing Technologies to Develop Climate Resilient Food Systems***

Climate change continues to adversely impact agri-food systems globally.<sup>103</sup> According to the World Bank, climate change is causing a reduction in crop yields, nutritional value available in major cereals, and livestock productivity in farms.<sup>104</sup> Moreover, climate change is projected to have a detrimental effect on soil nutrient availability and the spread of plant diseases.<sup>105</sup> In turn, current agricultural practices significantly contribute to climate variability, or small deviations from the average in weather events often pertaining to temperature and precipitation.<sup>106</sup> Current practices generate around 20% of global greenhouse gas emissions, and are one of the main causes of biodiversity loss, water scarcity, and soil degradation.<sup>107</sup> Failures in food systems continue to create large amounts of waste, with food loss and waste standing at an annual rate of 30%.<sup>108</sup> Food systems are, furthermore, a major cause of deforestation, contributing to up to 80% of global tropical deforestation and desertification.<sup>109</sup>

Many new and emerging technologies have the potential to both reduce agricultural greenhouse gas emissions and raise productivity.<sup>110</sup> Through online marketplaces, smallholder farmers can connect directly with consumers, decreasing the transit time between the farm and end-consumer, and subsequently reducing the amount of food waste created.<sup>111</sup> In particular, digital wallets can offer an avenue to better connect rural farmers with digital marketplaces and access to financing, especially as developing states take on a greater share of mobile subscriptions.<sup>112</sup> Moreover, digital technologies provide better visibility over the food supply chain, thus allowing stakeholders to remediate transit issues

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- 2022; United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. *World's Most Vulnerable Countries Lack the Capacity to Respond to a Global Pandemic*. 2020; Mokoena et al. *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*. *Climate Change's Disproportionate Impact on Women: Agricultural Workers in South Africa*. 2020.
- <sup>101</sup> International Fund for Agricultural Development. *Impacts of Ukraine conflict on food security already being felt in the Near East North Africa region and will quickly spread, warns IFAD*. 2022.
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- <sup>103</sup> United Nations Development Programme. *Announcing DiCRA - A Digital Public Good that Harnesses Open-Source Tech to Boost Climate Resilient Agriculture*. 2022.
- <sup>104</sup> World Bank. *Climate-Smart Agriculture*. 2021.
- <sup>105</sup> Maina. *Gene editing can help agriculture adapt to climate change and meet UN Food Systems Summit goals*. 2021.
- <sup>106</sup> United Nations Development Programme. *Transforming food and agriculture*. 2020; World Meteorological Organization. *FAQs - Climate*. 2022.
- <sup>107</sup> United Nations Development Programme. *Transforming food and agriculture*. 2020.
- <sup>108</sup> Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. *Agri-food chains Roundtable Outcome Document: Advancing Climate Actions on Resilient and Sustainable Agriculture Food Chains for a 1.5°C Net Zero World*. 2019.
- <sup>109</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations et al. *Transforming Food Systems: Pathways for Country-led Innovation*. 2022. p. 7.
- <sup>110</sup> International Food Policy Research Institute. *2022 Global Food Policy Report: Climate Change and Food Systems*. 2022.
- <sup>111</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *FAO COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme*. 2021.
- <sup>112</sup> Varangis et al. *Women in Agriculture Using Digital Financial Services: Lessons Learned from Technical Assistance Support to DigiFarm, Fenix, and myAgro*. 2021. pp. 26-27; Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *FAO Statistical Yearbook of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations*. 2013. p. 20.

more effectively and increase food availability and access during crises.<sup>113</sup> For example, organizations can make use of big data, or ever-expanding and increasingly complex datasets, to better inform decisions.<sup>114</sup> These technologies enable precision agriculture, through which farmers can utilize real-time weather forecasting to make day-to-day decisions regarding irrigation strategies and use of fertilizers and pesticides.<sup>115</sup> Data can also be shared between various stakeholders to effectively coordinate the deployment of assistance in times of crises.<sup>116</sup> For example, the West Africa Agricultural Productivity Program makes use of data networks between 13 countries to share knowledge about the development of climate-smart crops.<sup>117</sup>

Other technologies, such as remote sensing, deployment of drones, and satellite imaging can be used to monitor crops in real-time for better farm management and facilitates assistance delivery during post-disaster damage assessment and control processes.<sup>118</sup> While price remains one barrier to implementation, the use of farm associations and cooperatives can make the cost of drones affordable for smallholder farmers.<sup>119</sup> Controlled-environment agriculture employs algorithms to create optimal conditions for crop growth and can lower the environmental impact of agricultural practices.<sup>120</sup> Through advancements in biotechnology and seed science, crops more resilient to droughts and infestation have been developed, enhancing farmers' preparedness against weather extremes and environmental shocks.<sup>121</sup>

Several obstacles deter the large-scale adoption of many of the aforementioned technologies in agri-food systems globally.<sup>122</sup> According to IFPRI, food systems research and development suffers from underfunding, especially in developing states.<sup>123</sup> In many instances, low-income levels push smallholder farmers to focus their available resources on managing immediate shocks and, in turn, contribute to the volatility of capital flows by encouraging dependence on external sources to finance productivity-increasing measures.<sup>124</sup> In sub-Saharan Africa, FAO estimates that significant investment in global food systems could cut hunger in half.<sup>125</sup> To exacerbate the issue, access to financing and climate-smart

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<sup>113</sup> World Economic Forum. *Innovation with a Purpose: Improving Traceability in Food Value Chains through Technology Innovations*. 2019; United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia et al. *Transforming Food Systems: Regional Policy Brief*. 2020.

<sup>114</sup> United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Global Issues: Big Data for Sustainable Development*. n.d.

<sup>115</sup> International Food Policy Research Institute. *The Knowledge Lab on Climate-Resilient Food Systems*. 2018; Lim. *How technology can help address challenges in agriculture*. 2022.

<sup>116</sup> United Nations Development Programme. *Announcing DiCRA - A Digital Public Good that Harnesses Open-Source Tech to Boost Climate Resilient Agriculture*. 2022; Blais. *J-WAFS co-hosts independent food systems summit dialogues*. 2021.

<sup>117</sup> World Bank. *Climate-Smart Agriculture*. 2021.

<sup>118</sup> International Food Policy Research Institute. *The Knowledge Lab on Climate-Resilient Food Systems*. 2018; United Nations, World Food Programme. *Innovation and digital transformation*. 2022; United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. *Countries look to satellite technology to tackle food insecurity*. 2021.

<sup>119</sup> High-Level African Union Panel on Emerging Technologies. *Drones on the Horizon: Transforming Africa's Agriculture*. n.d. p. 27.

<sup>120</sup> Lim. *How technology can help address challenges in agriculture*. 2022.

<sup>121</sup> Maina. *Gene editing can help agriculture adapt to climate change and meet UN Food Systems Summit goals*. 2021; Lim. *How technology can help address challenges in agriculture*. 2022.

<sup>122</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *Gender equality action for climate-resilient food systems and agriculture*. 2021; Blais. *J-WAFS co-hosts independent food systems summit dialogues*. 2021; United Nations, Food and Agriculture Organization. *Gender equality action for climate-resilient food systems and agriculture*. 2021.

<sup>123</sup> International Food Policy Research Institute. *2022 Global Food Policy Report: Climate Change and Food Systems*. 2022.

<sup>124</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *FAO Statistical Yearbook of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations*. 2013. p. 18.

<sup>125</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations et al. *Transforming Food Systems: Pathways for Country-led Innovation*. 2022. p. 8.



agricultural technologies is limited for vulnerable groups.<sup>126</sup> Despite this, combining indigenous and modern knowledge through digital climate-smart technologies can lead to better adoption rates amongst farmers and small producers in agri-food systems.<sup>127</sup> Although there is a plethora of data generated from diverse stakeholders in agri-food systems, lack of standardization and scalability hinder the effective employment of the data stored.<sup>128</sup> Without emphasis on social change, many smallholder farmers, especially those who are older and did not receive extensive formal education, avoid utilizing some of the climate-smart technologies available due to their unfamiliarity with the technologies in question.<sup>129</sup> To combat these issues, IFPRI recommends an intersectional approach that focuses on creating social change and employing advanced technology.<sup>130</sup>

## Conclusion

The compounding effects of COVID-19, ongoing conflicts, and extreme weather events continue to cause major disruptions to food systems in Africa, which subsequently lead to rising prices, increased crop and livestock loss, and lower access to crucial assistance.<sup>131</sup> This has led to decelerated, or in some regions even reversed, progress towards achieving SDG 2.<sup>132</sup> Within Africa, the adverse impacts of crises continue to leave vulnerable groups at much higher risk of food insecurity and malnutrition.<sup>133</sup> Although many efforts endeavored to build food systems' resilience against crises, African communities continue to face many challenges that hinder progress, including limited access to capital, inadequate infrastructure, and ineffective utilization of data.<sup>134</sup> Since agriculture constitutes a significant portion of economic activity for many Member States, reducing the sector's carbon footprint, which accounts for roughly 20% of annual greenhouse gas emissions, can lead to more sustainable agri-food systems.<sup>135</sup> Likewise, new and emerging technologies offer opportunities for increased transparency of supply chains, better communication, and, ultimately, more efficient and sustainable farm management practices.<sup>136</sup>

## Further Research

Delegates may wish to consider the following questions to guide their research: How can intra-African trade contribute to the achievement of food security? How can technologies be used to alleviate the impacts of crises on vulnerable groups? In what ways should vulnerable groups be involved in discussions pertinent to food systems? How can gender equality improve food systems? How can climate-smart technologies lower the carbon footprint of the agricultural industry? What role can African

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<sup>126</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *Gender equality action for climate-resilient food systems and agriculture*. 2021.

<sup>127</sup> United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia et al. *Transforming Food Systems: Regional Policy Brief*. 2020.

<sup>128</sup> Blais. *J-WAFS co-hosts independent food systems summit dialogues*. 2021.

<sup>129</sup> International Food Policy Research Institute. *The Knowledge Lab on Climate-Resilient Food Systems*. 2018; Lim. *How technology can help address challenges in agriculture*. 2022.

<sup>130</sup> International Food Policy Research Institute. *2022 Global Food Policy Report: Climate Change and Food Systems*. 2022. pp. 2-3.

<sup>131</sup> Global Network Against Food Crises et al. *2022 Global Report on Food Crises: Joint Analysis for Better Decisions*. 2022. p. 11.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid. p. 8.

<sup>133</sup> United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Sub-Saharan Africa under threat from multiple humanitarian crises*. 2022.

<sup>134</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations et al. *Transforming Food Systems: Pathways for Country-led Innovation*. 2022. p. 7; Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *Gender equality action for climate-resilient food systems and agriculture*. 2021.

<sup>135</sup> United Nations Development Programme. *Transforming food and agriculture*. 2020.

<sup>136</sup> International Food Policy Research Institute. *2022 Global Food Policy Report: Climate Change and Food Systems*. 2022; World Economic Forum. *Innovation with a Purpose: Improving Traceability in Food Value Chains through Technology Innovations*. 2019; United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia et al. *Transforming Food Systems: Regional Policy Brief*. 2020; United Nations Development Programme. *Announcing DiCRA - A Digital Public Good that Harnesses Open-Source Tech to Boost Climate Resilient Agriculture*. 2022; Blais. *J-WAFS co-hosts independent food systems summit dialogues*. 2021.

financial institutions play to increase resilience of food systems against crises? How can multilateral data sharing make food systems in Africa more efficient?

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*FAO's conceptual framework on sustainable food systems offers the reader a visual representation of the structure of a food system. It provides a figure titled "Food Systems Wheel," which describes the interactions between relevant stakeholders within the three dimensions of sustainability: economic, social, and environmental. Additionally, the document explores what a sustainable food system means within the aforementioned dimensions, giving an overview of how FAO's areas of work overlap with the steps to develop sustainable food systems. The visual representations used throughout the framework may give the delegates a more structured view into sustainable food systems, their components, and the diverse actors participating in the development of food systems.*

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations et al. *Africa Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition 2021: Statistics and Trends*. 2021. Retrieved 26 June 2022 from:

<https://www.fao.org/3/cb7496en/cb7496en.pdf>

*The joint report by FAO, the AU, and ECA describes the current state of food security on the African continent. It identifies current challenges for overcoming malnourishment. Its regional focus differentiates this source from others. Understanding the current extent of food insecurity helps delegates to grasp the magnitude of malnourishment, which is an important aspect in addressing food systems.*

Sokourenko et al. *Progress in African Food Systems: What do the Data Say?* 2022. Retrieved 10 September 2022 from: [https://www.gainhealth.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/AGRA-GAIN%20AGRF%20report%20draft\\_4Sept2022.pdf](https://www.gainhealth.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/AGRA-GAIN%20AGRF%20report%20draft_4Sept2022.pdf)

*In anticipation of the 2022 African Green Revolution Forum, GAIN and the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa published this document, in which they leverage data visualized in the Food Systems Dashboard to provide actionable insights to African leaders. The report highlights the value of data to outline granular, actionable indicators that can be used to inform and promote cooperation between various food systems actors in the region. It also provides a mechanism for entities such as the CAADP to achieve their mandates more effectively. Delegates can utilize the data available through both the Food Systems Dashboard and the report to gain insight into their Member States' and, more generally, African progress in developing sustainable and resilient food systems.*

United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Food Systems Summit x SDGs*. n.d. Retrieved 25 June 2022 from: <https://www.un.org/en/food-systems-summit/sdgs>

*The Food Systems Summit was held in 2021 under the leadership of the UN Secretary-General as a part of the efforts to achieve the goals outlined for the UN Decade of Action for Nutrition. Member States convened to transform the world's food systems, and address some of the challenges and limitations posed on food systems due to COVID-19. As the source illustrates, developing sustainable and resilient food systems not only addresses SDG 2 (zero hunger), but is also strongly linked to the achievement of all 17 SDGs. Sustainable food systems can increase job opportunities, address gender imbalances in relevant sectors, support the deliverance of adequate nutrition, reduce global emissions, and bolster small-scale enterprises, among other contributions to the realization of the 2030 Agenda.*

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*The Global Crisis Response Group (GCRG) on Food, Energy and Finance was established to support governments in preventing and responding to crises, by coordinating efforts to address nascent risks, and generate strategies to strengthen Member States' responses in three main challenges – food, energy, and finance. In its second brief, the GCRG examines the effects of the war in Ukraine on the global access to food, energy, and finance, especially in the light of damages incurred by the global economy during the COVID-19 pandemic. The policy brief provides delegates with information on the indirect effects of the war in Ukraine on the global economy generally, and African Member States more specifically to understand the magnitude of the war on the food security in African countries.*

Varangis et al. *Women in Agriculture Using Digital Financial Services: Lessons Learned from Technical Assistance Support to DigiFarm, Fenix, and myAgro*. 2021. Retrieved 1 September 2022 from: <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/222361617683660582/pdf/Women-in-Agriculture-Using-Digital-Financial-Services-Lessons-Learned-from-Technical-Assistance-Support-to-DigiFarm-Fenix-and-myAgro.pdf>

*This World Bank report provides a comparative analysis of the technical assistance support offered to three financial service providers (FSPs) in Uganda, Tanzania, and Kenya to better serve women in agriculture with digital financial products. Within the report, the three FSPs compiled field data regarding their female client base, particularly related to mobile phone ownership, and then tailored a suite of financial products with varying degrees of success. The report provides an easy-to-use table that shares the three FSPs' insights into five characteristics – agency, decision-making power, sources of income, level of comfort with digital technology, and prior use of financial services – that altered the effectiveness of each approach. Additionally, the report concludes with a number of recommendations for FSPs and development organizations that delegates will find useful as they begin to consider possible solutions. Delegates might also find the report helpful as a starting point in understanding the myriad of different factors that affect women within the region, especially as it relates to agency, decision-making power, property ownership, and financial hurdles.*

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## 2. Mainstreaming Human Rights Throughout the African Continental Free Trade Area

### Introduction

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) seeks to build a single market for the trade of goods and services and to enable free movement of people and investments throughout the entire African continent.<sup>137</sup> Officially launched in 2021, it is a flagship initiative of the African Union's (AU) *Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want* (Agenda 2063), which commits each Member State of the AU to important human rights objectives and poverty-related goals for transformative sustainable development.<sup>138</sup> The AfCFTA aims to integrate African markets to boost output in manufacturing, services, and natural resource sectors and transform economies across the continent.<sup>139</sup>

A free trade area is a region wherein multiple countries have signed a free trade agreement that will generally involve the reduction or removal of import and export tariffs, the easier exchange of goods, the movement of people, and more.<sup>140</sup> The AfCFTA is being implemented in phases: phase I encompasses trading in goods and services; phase II involves intellectual property rights, investment, and competition policy; phase III will cover e-commerce.<sup>141</sup> The World Bank projects that the AfCFTA can lift 30 million people out of extreme poverty and has the potential to boost the African continent's income by \$450 billion, adding an additional \$76 billion to global income by 2035.<sup>142</sup> Economic transformation on this scale has the potential to improve many human rights, such as the right to an adequate standard of living, the right to health, the right to food and shelter, the right to work, and others.<sup>143</sup> For example, by reducing tariffs among African countries, the AfCFTA could enhance market competitiveness, thereby making goods and services produced on the continent more affordable for consumers, especially those battling poverty.<sup>144</sup>

However, critics of the free trade agreement state that it may also have negative impacts on human rights, including the entrenchment of inequalities of gender, and the right to health and an adequate standard of living.<sup>145</sup> As outlined by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), "placing too much emphasis on conventional economic measurements of economy-wide gains arising from liberalization can overshadow adverse distributional impacts. The [AfCFTA] will impact different socio-economic groups differently due to existing patterns of discrimination...those who are already most vulnerable are at risk of being adversely impacted by the [AfCFTA]." <sup>146</sup> In this context, human rights mainstreaming implies that considerations for human rights are put at the center of all work,

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<sup>137</sup> African Union. *Agreement establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area*. 2018. p. 4; United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa. *AfCFTA is up and running despite challenges, Secretary General assures critics*. 2021.

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<sup>143</sup> Noriega. Global Campus of Human Rights. *Economics and Human Rights Must Work Together to Protect the Most Vulnerable*. 2022.

<sup>144</sup> World Bank Group. *Boosting Competition in African Markets Can Enhance Growth and Lift at least Half a Million People out of Poverty*. 2016.

<sup>145</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Human rights in the trade arena*. 2011; United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls*. n.d.; United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa et al. *The Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) in Africa – A Human Rights Perspective*. 2017. p. 47.

<sup>146</sup> United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa et al. *The Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) in Africa – A Human Rights Perspective*. 2017 p. 12.

from policy development and implementation to resource allocation and program monitoring.<sup>147</sup> By utilizing a human rights approach in its implementation, the AfCFTA could not only drive sustainable development on the continent of Africa but also safeguard human rights.<sup>148</sup>

### ***International and Regional Framework***

The free trade area on the African continent was established through the *Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area* (AfCFTA Agreement) (2018) and, as of October 2022, two accompanying protocols govern the trade of goods and services and the freedom of movement throughout the continent.<sup>149</sup> As of October 2022, 43 countries have both signed and ratified the agreement.<sup>150</sup> In its preamble, the AfCFTA Agreement recognizes human rights as crucial for international trade and economic cooperation, in particular the promotion and attainment of gender equality.<sup>151</sup> This is reemphasized in the AfCFTA's *Protocol on Trade in Services* (2019) where States parties agree to mobilize resources to improve the export capacity of suppliers, especially women and youth.<sup>152</sup> Additionally, the *Kigali Declaration and the Protocol to the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community relating to the Free Movement of Persons, Right to Residence and Right to Establishment* (Protocol on Free Movement) (2018) includes provisions for the right to freedom of movement and the right to work, which were originally established in Articles 13 and 23 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) (1948).<sup>153</sup> To further advance gender equality throughout the trade regimes of the AfCFTA, leaders at the 13<sup>th</sup> Extraordinary Session of the African Union in 2020 called for the development of a *Protocol for Women and Youth in Trade*, for which consultations began in May 2022.<sup>154</sup>

The UDHR enshrines the fundamental rights and freedoms of all persons that Member States of the UN should strive to protect and defend.<sup>155</sup> In 1966, the UN General Assembly adopted the *International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights* (ICESCR) and the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR), two international treaties that further defined international human rights and introduced legally-binding commitments to uphold human rights.<sup>156</sup> Trade, its benefits, and its negative impacts are intertwined with these fundamental human rights.<sup>157</sup> Article 25 of the UDHR and article 11 of the ICESCR both uphold the right to an adequate standard of living, which would be achieved by the economic integration brought by trade.<sup>158</sup> Article 7 of the UDHR and article 3 of the ICESCR and the ICCPR provide for the equality of men and women that is emphasized in the objectives of the AfCFTA

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<sup>147</sup> United Nations Development Programme. *Investing in Human Rights for Sustainable Development: Consolidated Annual Report of the Human Rights Mainstreaming Fund 2021*. 2022; United Nations Development Programme. *Mainstreaming Human Rights in Development Policies and Programming: UNDP Experiences*. 2012.

<sup>148</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Trade and Investment*. 2022; United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa et al. *The Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) in Africa – A Human Rights Perspective*. 2017.

<sup>149</sup> Trade Law Centre. *African Continental Free Trade Area: A TRALAC Guide - 8th Edition*. 2022.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> African Union. *Agreement establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area*. 2018.

<sup>152</sup> Zhuawu. The Commonwealth Trade Hot Topics. *The African Continental Free Trade Area: An Opportunity for Boosting Women in Trade*. 2021. p. 1.

<sup>153</sup> Trade Law Centre. *African Continental Free Trade Area: A TRALAC Guide - 8th Edition*. 2022; United Nations, General Assembly. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*. 1948.

<sup>154</sup> United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *The Women in Trade Protocol to Promote Women in Business*. 2021; African Continental Free Trade Area. *Women and Youth in Trade*. 2022.

<sup>155</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*. 1948; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *International Bill of Human Rights*. 2022.

<sup>156</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *International Bill of Human Rights*. 2022.

<sup>157</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Key Messages about trade and Human Rights*. 2021.

<sup>158</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*. 1948; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *International Bill of Human Rights*. 2022.

Agreement.<sup>159</sup> Article 7 of the ICESCR and article 23 of the UDHR provide that everyone has a right to work in favorable conditions of employment.<sup>160</sup>

The African continent's legally-binding normative framework for human rights is the *African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights* (African Charter).<sup>161</sup> The African Charter was adopted in 1986 by the Organization of African Unity, the predecessor organization to the AU, and has been ratified by all AU Member States.<sup>162</sup> As such, ensuring human rights is obligatory for all African countries as they have ratified at least one human rights instrument.<sup>163</sup> The 2004 *Pretoria Declaration on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in Africa* further states that in order to fully address African needs and aspirations, people's economic, social, and cultural rights must be considered alongside and throughout development initiatives.<sup>164</sup>

In 1986, the UN General Assembly adopted resolution 41/128 on the "Declaration on the right to development," which addresses underdevelopment.<sup>165</sup> The declaration calls for equal opportunities to be given to all people, including marginalized communities, and that the rights to health, food, shelter and an adequate standard of living be upheld by all UN Member States.<sup>166</sup> In 2012, the General Assembly built on this by linking human rights and trade in resolution 67/171 on "The right to development."<sup>167</sup> The resolution urges multilateral trade negotiations to mainstream the right to development within global trade and investment regimes and strengthen global partnerships for development within international trade institutions.<sup>168</sup>

By establishing sustainable trade infrastructure, economic vitality, and labor standards throughout the African continent, the AfCFTA intersects with the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2030 Agenda) (2015) and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).<sup>169</sup> One of the common goals within the AfCFTA Agreement and both the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 is the creation of "a high standard of living, quality of life and well-being for all citizens," which intersects with SDG 1 (no poverty), SDG 2 (zero hunger), SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), and SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities).<sup>170</sup> The foundational goals of the AfCFTA Agreement directly coincide with each of the other SDGs, such as building transformed economies that provide for healthy, well-nourished, and educated people; environmentally sustainable and climate resilient economies; and peace, security, and stability throughout the continent; and global recognition of Africa as a key partner.<sup>171</sup> Thus, when Member States implement the AfCFTA, they can help achieve both the Agenda 2063 and the SDGs.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> Kuwonu. United Nations, Africa Renewal. *Africa's freedom struggles and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. 2019.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa et al. *The Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) in Africa – A Human Rights Perspective*. 2017.

<sup>164</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Trade and Investment*. 2022.

<sup>165</sup> United Nations, General Assembly. *Declaration on the Right to Development (A/RES/41/128)*. 1986. p. 186.

<sup>166</sup> Zarrili. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. *The Case for Mainstreaming Gender in Trade Policy*. 2017.

<sup>167</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Trade and Investment*. 2022.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> Viljoen. Trade Law Centre. *The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*. 2018; Thornberry et al. The Danish Institute for Human Rights. *Integrated Review and Reporting on SDGs and Human Rights – A Key to Effective, Efficient and Accountable Implementation*. 2019. p. 3.

<sup>170</sup> African Union. *Linking Agenda 2063 and the SDGs*. n.d.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> African Continental Free Trade Area. *AU-AfCFTA: Creating One African Market*. 2022.



## ***Role of the International System***

As the UN's regional commission for the continent of Africa, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) plays a vital role in fostering intra-regional integration and advising on best practices for social and economic development of African Member States of the United Nations (UN).<sup>173</sup> As such, ECA is mandated to help countries implement the AfCFTA, which could include taking a human rights-based approach.<sup>174</sup> ECA has actively participated in the creation of the AfCFTA Agreement, specifically urging negotiators to protect human rights at each stage of its development.<sup>175</sup> It also works at regional and sub-regional levels to provide operational support, such as by advising Member States on ways to mainstream human rights in trade policy development.<sup>176</sup>

ECA convenes Member States to discuss critical issues and advocate for various policies relating to the AfCFTA and also serves as a forum for research on and analysis of the development of national strategies for implementing the AfCFTA.<sup>177</sup> Through its African Trade Policy Centre (ATPC), ECA works with the African Union Commission and Member States to deepen Africa's trade integration in the context of effectively implementing the AfCFTA.<sup>178</sup> ECA also commissioned reports that contribute to the monitoring and evaluation of the status of human rights through implementation of the AfCFTA.<sup>179</sup>

Within the larger UN system, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) leads the business and human rights agenda.<sup>180</sup> In 2022, OHCHR launched the Business and Human Rights (BHR) Africa Project, which aims to enhance local expertise on BHR, strengthen accountability for business-related human rights impacts, and build the capacity of governments and regional bodies to incorporate the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights into policy plans and regulatory frameworks.<sup>181</sup>

Established by Article 9 of the AfCFTA Agreement, the governance structure of the AfCFTA consists of the Secretariat; the Assembly, made up of heads of state and governments of the AU; the Council of Ministers, made up of the trade ministers from AfCFTA States parties; and the Committee of Senior Trade Officials.<sup>182</sup> The AfCFTA Agreement also acknowledges eight existing Free Trade Areas of Regional Economic Communities (RECs) throughout Africa as building blocks towards the establishment of the AfCFTA.<sup>183</sup> The AfCFTA institutional framework allows each REC to be represented in the Committee of Senior Trade Officials in an advisory capacity, however the RECs themselves are not parties to the AfCFTA.<sup>184</sup> Using this structure, many of the REC best practices for human rights mainstreaming can be carried over, such as their experience bringing human rights into policies that reduce regional vulnerability

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<sup>173</sup> United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa. *About Us*. n.d.

<sup>174</sup> United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa. *Report of the Conference of Ministers on the work of its fifty-third session (E/ECA/CM/53/5)*. 2021.

<sup>175</sup> United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa et al. *The Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) in Africa – A Human Rights Perspective*. 2017; MacLeod. Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung. *Human Rights and the African Continental Free Trade Area Report: Taking Stock and Navigating the Way Forward*. 2022.

<sup>176</sup> United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa. *About Us*. n.d.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa. *AfCFTA is up and running despite challenges, Secretary General assures critics*. 2021.

<sup>179</sup> United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa et al. *The Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) in Africa – A Human Rights Perspective*. 2017.

<sup>180</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *OHCHR and business and human rights*. 2022.

<sup>181</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Business and Human Rights (BHR) Africa Project*. 2022.

<sup>182</sup> Trade Law Centre. *African Continental Free Trade Area: A TRALAC Guide - 9th Edition*. 2022.

<sup>183</sup> United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa et al. *The Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) in Africa – A Human Rights Perspective*. 2017.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

to shocks and economic downturn.<sup>185</sup> While promoting human rights is not their main goal, RECs play a crucial role in promoting human rights by improving the standard of living of people.<sup>186</sup>

National Human Rights Institutions (NHRI's) are bodies created by individual Member States for the protection and promotion of human rights at a national level.<sup>187</sup> A study conducted by the Network of African National Human Rights Institutions on the role of NHRI's in the AfCFTA found that there has been limited involvement on a coordinating level to mainstream human rights in the implementation of the AfCFTA.<sup>188</sup> However, several Member States, such as Kenya, Senegal and Uganda, have independently collaborated with NHRIs to create national action plans to understand human rights implications and mitigate risks caused by private sector activity.<sup>189</sup>

The private sector plays a key role in implementing the AfCFTA, as corporate leaders are ultimately responsible for their businesses' compliance with regulatory frameworks for human rights protection.<sup>190</sup> In 2022, ECA worked with AfCFTA to convene private sector leaders and industry trade associations of countries that are States parties to the AfCFTA in the Pharma Initiative, which seeks to address the human right to health by increasing access to pharmaceuticals through public-private partnerships.<sup>191</sup> Through this initiative, private sector stakeholders discussed regulations for quality and standards of medicine in line with the human right to health and attempted to boost regional manufacture and procurement of pharmaceuticals in line with the right to work and the right to development.<sup>192</sup> ECA recently called for additional public-private partnerships to implement the AfCFTA to increase intra-African trade in agri-food, industry, and services to reduce regional vulnerability against external shocks, such as the war in Ukraine.<sup>193</sup>

The AU engages civil society organizations (CSOs) in the development of the AfCFTA Agreement through initiatives, such as the AfCFTA Stakeholders Forum held in Dakar, Senegal during AfCFTA negotiations in 2018 and the AfCFTA Civil Society Forum held concurrently with the AU Extraordinary Summit in Niamey, Niger that launched the operational phase of the AfCFTA in 2019.<sup>194</sup> As AfCFTA implementation moves forward, additional support from civil society actors might include monitoring and evaluation for negative impacts of the AfCFTA on marginalized communities.<sup>195</sup> CSOs could lend local knowledge and community connection to efforts for awareness-raising of new rules and opportunities in the economic area among vulnerable groups, such as cross-border traders, women, youth, and minority groups.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *UN Human Rights and NHRIs*. 2022.

<sup>188</sup> Network of African National Human Rights Institutions. *Terms of Reference for a Baseline Study on National Human Rights Institutions Involvement with the Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement*. n.d. pp. 1-2.

<sup>189</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Concept Note: African Business and Human Rights Forum*. 2022. p. 2.

<sup>190</sup> United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa et al. *Negotiating institutions: putting in place the right foundations*. 2019.

<sup>191</sup> United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa. *AfCFTA-anchored Pharma Initiative*. 2022.

<sup>192</sup> United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa. *AfCFTA-anchored pharmaceutical initiative holds consultative meeting with Kenya association of pharmaceutical industry (KAPI)*. 2022.

<sup>193</sup> United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa. *AfCFTA could be the Marshall Plan for the African Economic Recovery*. 2022.

<sup>194</sup> Vandyck. West Africa Civil Society Institute. *Implementing the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA): The Role of Civil Society*. 2021; African Review. *Civil Society Forum to launch AfCFTA consultative dialogue framework*. 2019.

<sup>195</sup> Horn of Africa Bulletin. *Potential Contributions of Civil Society Organisations to the Effective Implementation of the AfCFTA: Focus on the Eastern African Region*. 2022.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

## **Mainstreaming the Rights of Women and Youth in the African Continental Free Trade Area**

African women-owned businesses contribute to 60% of gross domestic product (GDP) of the continent.<sup>197</sup> With over 65% of its population being under 25, Africa is also the world's youngest continent.<sup>198</sup> Women and youth are thus the "drivers of the African economy."<sup>199</sup> However, these groups still lack access to the many opportunities created by the AfCFTA.<sup>200</sup> An increase in industrialization could highlight issues, such as a lack of skills in the workforce to comply with new formal trade regulations, and lead to an increase in discrimination, which will hinder the role of women and youth in the AfCFTA.<sup>201</sup> The costs for duties and transactions which are required for formal trade accounting are also often too high for people in these vulnerable groups to pay.<sup>202</sup> Thus, women and youth resort to the informal sector, also known as Informal Cross Border Trade (ICBT), to avoid unemployment and earn a livelihood.<sup>203</sup>

Although gender equality and inclusive socio-economic development are objectives of the AfCFTA Agreement, women and youth empowerment are only referenced in the AfCFTA *Protocol on Trade in Services*.<sup>204</sup> Additionally, while most studies of the AfCFTA Agreement focus on the rights of women in the AfCFTA, there are very few which address the rights of youth.<sup>205</sup> The AfCFTA *Protocol for Women and Youth in Trade* aims to place women and youth at the center of the AfCFTA, however, as it is still being developed, its provisions remain unclear.<sup>206</sup> The Protocol is important in ensuring that these groups are integrated into opportunities available under the AfCFTA and ensuring the mainstreaming of their rights in the AfCFTA.<sup>207</sup> However, the mainstreaming of rights of women and youth does not stop at the drafting of the *Protocol for Women and Youth in Trade* but also includes proper implementation strategies to ensure its impact.<sup>208</sup>

Unlike formal cross-border trade, which is the trade between neighboring countries by registered traders in line with regulatory standards, ICBT is the trade in goods and products by unregistered persons.<sup>209</sup> ICBT accounts for up to 85% of Africa's economic activity, yet by its nature remains unregulated.<sup>210</sup> Policy makers and regulators often view ICBT as illegal shadow trade, a threat to formal trade and a ruse for tax evasion because it may involve the trade in illegal goods and unreported products.<sup>211</sup> Women make up to

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<sup>197</sup> United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa. United Nations, Africa Renewal. *African women identified as the core of the AfCFTA agenda*. 2022.

<sup>198</sup> Igbohor. United Nations, Africa Renewal. *AfCFTA: Experts, traders call for robust participation of women and youth*. 2021.

<sup>199</sup> United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa et al. *An Inclusive African Continental Free Trade Area: Aid for Trade and the Empowerment of Women and Young People*. 2019. p. 17.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid. p. 17.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid. pp. 17-18.

<sup>202</sup> Gaarder et al. United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa. *Towards an estimate of informal cross-border trade in Africa*. 2021. p. 2.

<sup>203</sup> United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa et al. *The Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) in Africa – A Human Rights Perspective*. 2017. p. 62.

<sup>204</sup> African Union. *Agreement establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area*. 2018. pp. 4, 52.

<sup>205</sup> Atuyambe. YouLead One Young Africa et al. *Making the AfCFTA Promises a Reality for African Youth: A Continental Study on Capacity Gaps, Policy Constraints and Prospects of Youth Inclusion in AfCFTA*. n.d. p. 23.

<sup>206</sup> MacLeod. Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung. *Human Rights and the African Continental Free Trade Area Report: Taking Stock and Navigating the Way Forward*. 2022. p. 75.

<sup>207</sup> Nwafuru. Nairametrics. *AfCFTA to promote inclusive trades for women and youth in Africa*. 2021.

<sup>208</sup> Owusu-Gyamfi. African Center for Economic Transformation. *To be successful, the African Continental Free Trade Area needs a gender protocol*. 2021.

<sup>209</sup> United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. *Informal cross-border trade for empowerment of women, economic development, and regional integration in Eastern and Southern Africa*. n.d.

<sup>210</sup> Medina et al. International Monetary Fund. *The Informal Economy in Sub-Saharan Africa: Size and Determinants*. 2017. p. 2; Igbohor. United Nations, Africa Renewal. *AfCFTA: Experts, traders call for robust participation of women and youth*. 2021; United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa et al. *The Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) in Africa – A Human Rights Perspective*. 2017. p. 61.

<sup>211</sup> MacLeod. Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung. *Human Rights and the African Continental Free Trade Area Report: Taking Stock and Navigating the Way Forward*. 2022. p. 12; Olafuyi. Afronomics Law. *The Informal Economy and*

70% of informal traders and are usually from middle to low-income households with no other means of income, no other form of employment, a lack of education, and little to no assets to raise capital.<sup>212</sup> Due to the lack of regulation of ICBT, informal traders often face many constraints, including theft of goods, extortion, unsafe conditions along border infrastructure, and high financial and personal insecurity.<sup>213</sup> The regulation of ICBT would ensure that the human rights of informal traders are protected and guarantee more investments in the sector by private actors, which would ensure human rights, such as the right to an adequate standard of living.<sup>214</sup>

Despite the prevalence of ICBT throughout the continent, it is not referenced in the AfCFTA Agreement.<sup>215</sup> While there are few continent-wide policies to govern ICBT, some African states have taken steps to protect the rights of informal traders, especially women and young people.<sup>216</sup> For example, National ID Cards have been introduced via an agreement between Uganda, Rwanda and Kenya, which serve as legal credentials for informal traders to use to more easily travel between borders and carry out ICBT, and at the same time, allow each of the states the means to monitor movement of ICBT traders.<sup>217</sup> ECA has supported the implementation of digital identity products across Africa to improve digital trade and inclusion, for women and youth.<sup>218</sup> ECA recognizes the significance of ICBT to Africa's economy, even stating that there is a lack of policies governing ICBT, mainly due to limited data on ICBT and a lack of standard practices.<sup>219</sup> Women and youth that take part in informal trade often in turn suffer stigmatization, violence, harassment, and poor working conditions.<sup>220</sup> Thus, solutions that address the role of ICBT in the AfCFTA ensures their protection and human rights.<sup>221</sup>

### **Monitoring and Evaluation of Human Rights in the African Continental Free Trade Area**

Monitoring and evaluation is the assessment of policies and programs to determine their effectiveness and impact, for example concerning human rights in the AfCFTA.<sup>222</sup> Monitoring and evaluation can help

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- the African Continental Free Trade Agreement: Trade Work for the Often Overlooked*. 2019; Afrika et al. Africa Economic Brief. *Informal Cross Border Trade in Africa: Implications and Policy*. 2012. pp. 1-12.
- <sup>212</sup> Afrika et al. Africa Economic Brief. *Informal Cross Border Trade in Africa: Implications and Policy*. 2012. p. 2; Bouet et al. International Food Policy Research Institute. *Informal Cross-Border Trade in Africa*. 2018. p. 1; Igbohor. United Nations, Africa Renewal. *AfCFTA: Experts, traders call for robust participation of women and youth*. 2021; Olafuyi. Afronomics Law. *The Informal Economy and the African Continental Free Trade Agreement: Trade Work for the Often Overlooked*. 2019.
- <sup>213</sup> Brenton et al. Africa Trade Policy Notes. *Risky Business: Poor Women Cross-Border Traders in the Great Lakes Region of Africa*. 2011. p. 4; Hammer et al. World Bank. *Opening Doors: How national IDs empower women cross border traders in East Africa*. 2017; Afrika et al. Africa Economic Brief. *Informal Cross Border Trade in Africa: Implications and Policy*. 2012. pp. 12-13.
- <sup>214</sup> Gaarder et al. United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa. *Towards an estimate of informal cross-border trade in Africa*. 2021. p. 13; United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa et al. *The Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) in Africa – A Human Rights Perspective*. 2017. p. 64; Afrika et al. Africa Economic Brief. *Informal Cross Border Trade in Africa: Implications and Policy*. 2012. p. 12.
- <sup>215</sup> Olafuyi. Afronomics Law. *The Informal Economy and the African Continental Free Trade Agreement: Trade Work for the Often Overlooked*. 2019.
- <sup>216</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>217</sup> Hammer et al. World Bank. *Opening Doors: How national IDs empower women cross border traders in East Africa*. 2017.
- <sup>218</sup> United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa. *Africa's success in mobilising power of its youth will deliver AfCFTA promise*. 2020.
- <sup>219</sup> Gaarder et al. United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa. *Towards an estimate of informal cross-border trade in Africa*. 2021. p. 16.
- <sup>220</sup> African Peer Review Mechanism. *A Study on the Opportunities in the AfCFTA for Women in the Informal Cross-Border Trade*. 2022. p. 2.
- <sup>221</sup> Ibid. p. 2.
- <sup>222</sup> United Nations Development Group. *Monitoring and Evaluation, UNDAF Companion Guidance*. n.d. p. 4; United Nations, Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. *CESCR General Comment No. 1: Reporting by States Parties*. 1981.



determine steps to ensure human rights are protected throughout the AfCFTA.<sup>223</sup> Although the AfCFTA Agreement refers to the implementation and monitoring and evaluation of its general provisions, there is no framework in place for the monitoring and evaluation of human rights in the AfCFTA.<sup>224</sup> Additionally, the AfCFTA protocols on trade in services and goods obligates the AfCFTA Council of Ministers to prepare annual monitoring and evaluation reports on the implementation of the AfCFTA Agreement, but lacks specifications on its impact on human rights.<sup>225</sup> However, there are efforts to ensure that data on human rights in the implementation of the AfCFTA is collected in throughout Africa.<sup>226</sup>

Human rights indicators (HRIs) are indices that assess and monitor human rights principles, their promotion and implementation.<sup>227</sup> HRIs are often used in national development plans to ensure the mainstreaming of human rights, but could also be used to monitor the impact of the AfCFTA on the enjoyment of human rights by people.<sup>228</sup> The monitoring and evaluation HRIs can help determine whether or not human rights are impacted by the AfCFTA.<sup>229</sup> Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms have proven most effective when carried out by independent consultants or external experts.<sup>230</sup> NHRIs and CSOs could also play a role in the monitoring and evaluation of human rights through their expertise and reporting on the impact of AfCFTA activities on human rights.<sup>231</sup>

ECA is tasked with supporting the implementation of the AfCFTA Agreement and monitoring and evaluation is crucial in ensuring the protection of human rights within the AfCFTA.<sup>232</sup> In 2017, ECA, in collaboration with the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, worked on a human rights impact assessment (HRIA) in preparation for AfCFTA Agreement negotiations.<sup>233</sup> The assessment applied human rights standards and tools to identify human rights concerns to take into consideration throughout the negotiation, design, implementation and monitoring of the AfCFTA.<sup>234</sup> In 2022, the Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung published a follow-up report using scorecards to outline progress made towards the recommendations of the 2017 report.<sup>235</sup> The assessment highlighted that human rights were particularly overlooked in the areas of ensuring adequate labor and social protections for people engaged in ICBT, developing trade remedies and safeguards for small-scale farmers and those supporting the continent's access to the right to food, and ensuring a human rights-consistent negotiation process through implementing mechanisms for transparency and consultation by non-state actors, including CSOs.<sup>236</sup>

Even with monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in place, certain factors can ensure monitoring and evaluation effectiveness, such as investments in tools and capacity.<sup>237</sup> Efforts to promote human rights in the implementation of the AfCFTA will be ineffective without proper monitoring and evaluation

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<sup>223</sup> United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa et al. *The Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) in Africa – A Human Rights Perspective*. 2017.

<sup>224</sup> MacLeod. Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung. *Human Rights and the African Continental Free Trade Area Report: Taking Stock and Navigating the Way Forward*. 2022. p. 46.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid. pp. 45-46.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid. p. 57.

<sup>227</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Human Rights Indicators: A Guide to Measurement and Implementation*. 2012. p. 16.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid. p. 104; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Key Messages about Trade and Human Rights*. 2021. p. 1.

<sup>229</sup> Crichton et al. Governance and Social Development Resource Centre. *Rights monitoring and indicators*. 2015.

<sup>230</sup> Zerk. Chatham House. *Human Rights Impact Assessment of Trade Agreements*. 2019. p. 23.

<sup>231</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Key Messages about Trade and Human Rights*. 2021.

<sup>232</sup> United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa et al. *The Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) in Africa – A Human Rights Perspective*. 2017.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid.; MacLeod. Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung. *Human Rights and the African Continental Free Trade Area Report: Taking Stock and Navigating the Way Forward*. 2022. pp. 46.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid.

<sup>237</sup> Schlangen. Center for Evaluation Innovation. *Monitoring and Evaluation for Human Rights Organizations: Three Case Studies*. 2014. p. 7.

mechanisms, HRIAs, and transparency and accountability systems.<sup>238</sup> Without human rights fully, systematically, and regularly monitored throughout implementation of the AfCFTA, it will be difficult to determine a negative or positive impact of the AfCFTA on people on the African continent and the enjoyment of their rights.<sup>239</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The AfCFTA Agreement recognizes the importance of human rights in the AfCFTA.<sup>240</sup> Although the AfCFTA brings with it many opportunities for development, it also raises concerns about the status of human rights in the implementation of the AfCFTA.<sup>241</sup> The rights of women and youth are important, and the monitoring and evaluation of human rights are also critical to ensuring the mainstreaming of human rights in the AfCFTA.<sup>242</sup> ECA, in partnership with the AfCFTA Secretariat, and other regional organizations can thus help mainstream human rights in the AfCFTA, protect the rights of women and youth, and ensure HRIAs and monitoring and evaluation of the AfCFTA implementation.<sup>243</sup>

### **Further Research**

As delegates continue to familiarize themselves with the topic, they should keep in mind the following questions: How can ECA collaborate with Member States, the AU, and the AfCFTA Secretariat to mainstream human rights in the implementation of the AfCFTA? What roles should private sector businesses play in promoting human rights throughout the implementation of the AfCFTA? What actions could be taken to promote the inclusion of CSOs in the AfCFTA and to provide for the rights of women and youth? What steps can be taken to ensure that the rights of women and youth are protected and promoted within the ICBT sector, or how could the free trade environment of the AfCFTA be inclusive and provide them opportunities?

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*This document includes the full consolidated treaty text of the AfCFTA. It contains the final draft of all components of the AfCFTA that are currently being implemented. Delegates will find it useful to understand the key economic terminology as defined through the lens of the African continent. The agreement also provides a comprehensive understanding of the governance structure of the AfCFTA and its associated trade dispute mechanism. Delegates should consult this primary source to discover to which extent human rights considerations have been built into the foundational structure of the AfCFTA and gain ideas along which reporting structures human rights might be monitored and evaluated.*

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<sup>238</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Human Rights Indicators: A Guide to Measurement and Implementation*. 2012. p. 105.

<sup>239</sup> United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa et al. *The Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) in Africa – A Human Rights Perspective*. 2017. p. 141.

<sup>240</sup> African Union. *Agreement establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area*. 2018. p. 1.

<sup>241</sup> United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa et al. *Towards enhanced partnerships to support an inclusive AfCFTA*. 2022.

<sup>242</sup> MacLeod. Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung. *Human Rights and the African Continental Free Trade Area Report: Taking Stock and Navigating the Way Forward*. 2022.

<sup>243</sup> Kombo. OpinioJuris. *Emerging Voices: Doing Regional Integration Better? The Possibility of Reinvigorating the Relationship Between International Human Rights Law and International Economic Law through the African Continental Free Trade Area*. 2019; United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa et al. *The Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) in Africa – A Human Rights Perspective*. 2017.

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*This document is an update on the report by ECA and the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, titled The Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) in Africa – A Human Rights Perspective. Delegates will find this useful to understand the recent developments of HRIA in the implementation of the AfCFTA and ICBT. The source addresses issues arising in the AfCFTA as it relates to human rights, including the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change on trade in Africa. It also addresses the recommendations raised in the previous document and the progress thus far.*

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights. *Key Messages about Trade and Human Rights*. 2021. Retrieved 22 June 2022 from: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-01/Key-Messages-on-Trade-and-Human-Rights.pdf>

*This fact sheet provides a synthesis of information on the intersection between trade, development and human rights using the African Continental Free Trade Area as its case study. Delegates will find it to be a useful resource that succinctly outlines the ways in which human rights and trade are interrelated and provides a quick fact sheet on the findings of the AfCFTA Human Rights Impact Assessment. The document also provides recommendations for future research on the role of civil society and national human rights institutions (NHRIs) when mainstreaming human rights in AfCFTA implementation.*

United Nations Development Programme. *Investing in Human Rights for Sustainable Development: Consolidated Annual Report of the Human Rights Mainstreaming Fund 2021*. 2022. Retrieved 13 September 2022 from: <https://mptf.undp.org/sites/default/files/documents/55950%20-%20HRM%20Fund%20Annual%20Report%202021%20-%20WEB%20final%2028may.pdf>

*This is an annual report on the work of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group Human Rights Mainstreaming Multi-Donor Trust Fund which is investing in human rights for sustainable development. It describes achievements of progress towards the SDGs and the success stories of the Human Rights Mainstreaming Fund. The report discusses the impact of human rights mainstreaming and the role of countries and their national policies in the promotion and protection of fundamental human rights and the need for accountability, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in strengthening the impact of human rights mainstreaming. Delegates should consult this source to understand the role that human rights mainstreaming in development and the integration of human rights into national and international policies and might be useful to apply onto the AfCFTA framework.*

United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa et al. *The Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) in Africa –A Human Rights Perspective*. 2017. Retrieved 15 June 2022 from: [https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Globalization/TheCFTA\\_A\\_HR\\_ImpactAssessment.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Globalization/TheCFTA_A_HR_ImpactAssessment.pdf)

*This document, jointly prepared by ECA and the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, represents a substantial assessment of the impact of the AfCFTA on human rights. The report discusses the human rights implications that were evaluated at the time of the negotiations that created the AfCFTA. The implications of the AfCFTA on human rights, especially the rights to movement, an adequate standard of living, food and its impact on vulnerable persons, including women, and the increase in ICBT outlined in the document should serve as a starting point for delegates research.*

United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa et al. *An Inclusive African Continental Free Trade Area: Aid for Trade and the Empowerment of Women and Young People*. 2019. Retrieved 2 August 2022 from: [https://www.wto.org/english/tratop\\_e/devel\\_e/a4t\\_e/gr19\\_e/a4treporteca2019\\_e.pdf](https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/devel_e/a4t_e/gr19_e/a4treporteca2019_e.pdf)

*This document, jointly prepared by ECA and the World Trade Organization, addresses the role of aid for trade in lowering barriers of entry for women and young people. Delegates will find it useful in understanding the opportunities and challenges which*

women and youth face as a result of the AfCFTA. The publication sheds light on trade inclusiveness and how national policies can be implemented to ensure that women and youth have a role in trade. Delegates should consult this source to better understand the priority actions for the empowerment of women and youth in the AfCFTA.

Zerk. Chatham House. *Human Rights Impact Assessment of Trade Agreements*. 2019. Retrieved 7 August 2022 from: <https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/2019-02-18HumanRightsTradeAgreements.pdf>

*This document addresses the need for HRIAs of trade agreements. Delegates will find it useful in understanding how HRIAs are conducted and why HRIAs are the foundations for the M&E of trade agreements. The assessment also discusses challenges which may occur in the M&E of these agreements and the different approaches and stakeholders of HRIAs. This resource gives delegates a real world application to HRIAs of the AfCFTA.*

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