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**Economic Commission for Africa
Committee of Experts of the Conference of African
Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development**
Thirty-ninth meeting

Addis Ababa (hybrid), 17–19 March 2021

Item 7 of the provisional agenda*

Date, venue and theme of the fifty-fourth session of the Commission**Date, venue and theme of the fifty-fourth session of
the Commission****Note by the secretariat****I. Introduction**

1. The present document contains suggestions made by the secretariat for the consideration of the Committee of Experts. The Committee may wish to consider the dates and a theme for the fifty-fourth session of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, to be held in 2022, and to provide the secretariat with guidance in that regard.

II. Date and venue

2. The secretariat is proposing that the fifty-fourth session of the Conference of Ministers be held in Addis Ababa in March 2022. The choice of the venue may change if the Conference decides otherwise upon an offer by a member State to host the meeting, bearing in mind that the actual additional cost directly and indirectly involved with holding the meeting outside of Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) headquarters must be borne by the host country.

III. Theme

3. The secretariat submits the following topic for the consideration of the Committee of Experts: “Rethinking economic development in the post-COVID-19 era”.

* E/ECA/COE/39/1.



A. Background

4. COVID-19 will continue to suppress economic activity and threaten lives in Africa through 2021 and into 2022, as vaccine rollout takes time and African economies try to recover from the fiscal impact of the crisis. Inequalities between countries will be stark, as richer economies return to a semblance of normalcy, but so too will inequalities be prominent within countries.

5. Economic development in the post-COVID-19 era is likely to entail greater uncertainty and turbulence as the impact of climate change intensifies, value chains reorganize and digitalization accelerates. Past development options are no longer viable. Climate change alone is estimated by ECA to reduce the gross domestic product of some African countries by as much as 15 per cent by 2030.¹ An African green recovery, encompassing climate-smart agriculture, fisheries and an energy transition, will be needed.

6. Inequality has been exposed and exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic; initial studies indicate that deprived children in the poorest countries lost more than six times the amount of schooling as did children in high-income countries.² The pandemic's impact on young people has been "systematic, deep and disproportionate", according to the International Labour Organization.³ With health-care workers estimated to be seven times as likely to contract severe COVID-19,⁴ public health-care systems may struggle to recover; we know this from the Ebola outbreak in West Africa, following which there was a 23 per cent decrease in health services delivery in Sierra Leone.⁵ COVID-19 is ultimately estimated to push as many as 150 million people into poverty, compounding the pre-existing threats of climate change and conflict.⁶

¹ ECA, "ECA's Building Forward for an African Green Recovery outlines bolder intra-African trade and climate-smart measures for continent's recovery", press release, 1 March 2021. Available at www.uneca.org/stories/eca%27s-building-forward-for-an-african-green-recovery-outlines-bolder-intra-african-trade-and.

² United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, United Nations Children's Fund and World Bank. *What Have We Learnt? Findings from a survey of ministries of education on national responses to COVID-19* (Paris, UNESCO, 2020). Available at <https://data.unicef.org/resources/national-education-responses-to-covid19/>.

³ ILO, *Youth & COVID-19: Impacts on jobs, education, rights and mental well-being* (ILO, 2020).

⁴ M. Mutambudzi, C. Niedwiedz, E.B. Macdonald and others, "Occupation and risk of severe COVID-19: prospective cohort study of 120 075 UK Biobank participants", *Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, 9 December 2020. Available at <https://oem.bmj.com/lookup/doi/10.1136/oemed-2020-106731>.

⁵ Ottar Mæstad and Eskindir Loha Shumbullo, "Ebola outbreak 2014-2016: Effects on other health services" *CMI*, 2020.

⁶ World Bank, "COVID-19 to Add as Many as 150 Million Extreme Poor by 2021", Press release, 7 October 2020.

B. The need for policy action

7. The theme for the 2022 ECA Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, “Rethinking economic development in the post-COVID-19 era”, allows a focus on economic development that accounts for the inequality, poverty and vulnerability challenges that will persist in the wake of COVID-19.

8. By focusing on inequality, poverty and vulnerability within this context, the 2022 Conference theme is intended to directly consider the pledge of all United Nations Member States, to ensure that “no one will be left behind” under the Sustainable Development Goals. Achieving this goal is a function of both the rate of economic growth and inequality. Even if high gross domestic product growth rates were to be achieved in Africa, that would fail to adequately address poverty and vulnerability if it were not accompanied by a reduction in inequality. Both economic growth and reduction of inequality will be needed.

9. The 2022 Conference theme will draw from and be informed by the following upcoming ECA flagship reports and analytical work: *COVID-19: Building Forward for an African Green Recovery*; *Economic Report on Africa 2021: Addressing the Challenges of Poverty and Vulnerability in Africa in the Time of COVID-19*; and the results of the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in November 2021, in Glasgow.

C. Platform for action to address inequalities

10. The theme of the 2022 Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development will allow a platform for policymakers from ECA constituent member States to evaluate the magnitude of the challenges of inequality in the wake of COVID-19, and consider the policies needed to create a more equal world. This will include policy responses to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable households, to ensure that economic recovery from COVID-19 in Africa is not delayed, and to respond to the challenge of climate change.

D. Previous themes

11. For reference, a list of the themes of some of the previous sessions of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development is contained in the annex to the present document.

Annex

Themes of previous sessions of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development

Session	Joint annual meetings of the Economic Commission for Africa and the African Union Commission	Year	Theme
Fifty-second	N/A	2019	Fiscal policy, trade and the private sector in a digital era: a strategy for Africa
Fifty-first	N/A	2018	African Continental Free Trade Area and fiscal space for jobs and economic diversification
Fiftieth	Tenth	2017	Growth, inequality and unemployment
Forty-ninth	Ninth	2016	Towards an integrated and coherent approach for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
Forty-eighth	Eighth	2015	Implementing Agenda 2063: planning, mobilizing and financing for development
Forty-seventh	Seventh	2014	Industrialization for inclusive and transformative development in Africa
Forty-sixth	Sixth	2013	Industrialization for an emerging Africa
Forty-fifth	Fifth	2012	Unleashing Africa's potential as a pole of global growth
Forty-fourth	Fourth	2011	Governing development in Africa
Forty-third	Third	2010	Promoting high-level sustainable growth to reduce unemployment in Africa
Forty-second	Second	2009	Enhancing the effectiveness of fiscal policy for domestic resources mobilization
Forty-first	First	2008	Meeting Africa's new challenges in the twenty-first century
Fortieth	N/A	2007	Accelerating Africa's growth and development to meet the Millennium Development Goals: emerging challenges and the way forward
Thirty-ninth	N/A	2006	Meeting the challenge of employment in Africa
Thirty-eighth	N/A	2005	Achieving the Millennium Development Goals in Africa
Thirty-seventh	N/A	2004	Mainstreaming trade policy in national development strategies
Thirty-sixth	N/A	2003	Accelerating Africa's progress and performance: the challenge of the New Partnership for Africa's Development
Thirty-fifth	N/A	2002	Accelerating Africa's progress and performance: the challenge of the New Partnership for Africa's Development
Thirty-fourth	N/A	2001	Implementing the Millennium Partnership for the African Recovery Programme: compact for Africa's recovery
Thirty-third	N/A	2000	The challenges of financing development in Africa