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**Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)**

Sub-regional Office for North Africa

**Intergovernmental Committee of Experts (ICE)**

Thirty Third Meeting

Tunis, 30 October – 02 November 2018

## **Aide-Memoire**

### **I- Context**

The ECA Sub-regional Office of North Africa ECA Office in North Africa (SRO-NA), is based in Rabat (Morocco) and covers seven countries: Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Sudan, and Tunisia. SRO-NA is one of five sub-regional Offices created by ECA since 1963, to promote a proximity policy in order to serve member countries and address their priority needs. Its main mission is to boost the capacity of its member states to develop and implement, based on reliable data, policies and programmes that can contribute to the structural economic and social transformation of North Africa. As part of ECA's new strategic guidance, the SRO-NA adopts a specialization field focused on "Employment, Skills, and Equitable Development".

This new guidance falls within the framework of the reform introduced by Ms. Vera Songwe, ECA's new Executive Secretary, and the review of the ECA's Strategic Framework 2018-2019 approved by the 51st Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning, and Economic Development held in Addis Ababa on May 11-15, 2018.

The new ECA's strategic framework is structured around five strategic areas:

- Consolidating the role of ECA as a leading institution, whose unique position allows it to provide regional solutions to the continent's problems;
- Finding sustainable-development solutions to accelerate the economic diversification and industrialisation of Africa;
- Developing innovative solutions to finance sustainable human, physical, and social infrastructures to facilitate Africa's transformation;
- Providing solutions to cross-border issues, focusing particularly on social inclusion;
- Contributing through regional solutions to global governance issues; and developing knowledge to defend against and manage the challenges of the upcoming generation in Africa.

As the statutory deliberative body of the Office, the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts (ICE) is in charge of supervising its activities. The ICE meets annually to review the report on SRO-NA's activities, short and medium-term action plans, work programme, and strategic orientations, in line with the priorities of the North African countries. The ICE meeting also provides a framework for analysis and exchanges between high-level experts from national administrations, researchers, as well as the private sector and civil society representatives, on the economic and social conditions of the sub-region, with a view to making recommendations on national strategies to be implemented for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and enhancement of regional integration.

Scheduled for the period from October 30 to November 02, 2018 in Tunis (Republic of Tunisia), the 33<sup>rd</sup> ICE session takes place in a context characterised by a recovery of global economic growth in 2017, standing at 3.1% (its highest level since 2011), and which is expected to reach 3.2% in 2018 and 2019 according to UN projections (DESA). Among the developing economies, Africa, as a whole, has experienced relatively a high economic growth in developing economies, reaching 3.7% in 2017. However, there are significant differences at the level of sub-regions: North Africa (4.9% excluding Libya and 6.2% including Libya) and East Africa (5.7%) recorded relatively high growth levels, while West Africa (2.6%), Southern Africa (1.4%), and Central Africa (0.1%), have shown growth rates below the continental average (3,7%).<sup>1</sup>

On the social level, unemployment, especially among young university graduates, remains one of the major challenges for the sub-region. This phenomenon is largely explained by the limited capacity of the countries of the region to create new jobs and by the mismatch between supply and demand on the labour market.

In terms of major development agendas, the continental and sub-regional context is marked by the implementation of Agendas 2030 and 2063 that constitute the frame of reference for the Continent's medium and long-term sustainable development, through the signature of the African Continental Free Trade Area agreement (AfCFTA), which will bring together 1.2bn people and a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of more than US\$2tn, as well as the upcoming adoption of the Global Compact for Migration to facilitate a safe, orderly and regular migration, are crucial steps that will have been made and that will contribute to the structural transformation of the Continent and to the carry out of the two above-mentioned agendas .

## **II- Objectives of the Meeting**

The ICE's 33<sup>rd</sup> Session will be held under the general topic "Data Revolution in North Africa: Putting Data in Support of Structural Transformation". This topic will be discussed in depth at the *ad hoc* expert meeting, organized in tandem with the ICE in order to conduct a comprehensive review of the data ecosystem in the sub-region with the view of a data improvement based on quality economic and social statistics, needed for the economic transformation and the achievement of SDGs 2030 Agenda and the 2063 Agenda in North Africa. Based on this review, the meeting will also aim to identify common problems facing the countries and to propose action plans suitable for the sub-regional context.

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<sup>1</sup> Sub-regional Profile-SRO-WA, 2018 (ECA/WA/ICE /21/00) data from UNDESA.

The ICE will also provide an opportunity for representatives of member countries to share their thoughts and proposals on the implementation of the AfCFTA, that represents a key strategy for intra-regional trade development, which should generate major economic gains for the Continent. Currently, the Continent's internal trade remains marginal, and one of ECA's objectives in this area is to assist member states to reverse this situation.

### **III- Expected Results**

It is expected that the ICE meeting will enrich and adopt the reports to be submitted by the SRO-NA, and come up with policy recommendations and strategies for decision-makers, to set up national development programs and accelerate the regional integration process. A detailed report of the meeting will synthesise the presentations, debates, contributions to the submitted documents, and the main conclusions and the recommendations.

The meeting's report will be forwarded to the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, ECA's legislative body.

### **IV- Meeting's Organisation and Proceedings**

The ICE's 33<sup>rd</sup> session will be organised as plenary sessions, where the reports drawn up by the Office and the papers of eminent experts will be presented and discussed. Final reports will be sent to member countries no later than two months after the conclusion of the meeting.

### **V- Participation**

Participation in the ICE meeting is namely open to high-level representatives of ministries, administrations and national institutions in charge of Planning and Economic and Social Development, Finance, Employment, Trade and Industry, Agriculture, Environment, and Social Development, representatives of the AMU General Secretariat and other regional IGOs in North Africa, representatives of the private sector and civil society organisations, universities and research centres, United Nations System agencies, as well as other partners of the development of the sub-region.

### **VI- Meeting's Date and Venue**

The meeting will take place from **30 October to 02 November 2018 in Tunis** (Republic of Tunisia).

### **VII- Working Languages**

Working languages of the meeting are **French, English and Arabic**.

**VIII- Contact Information**

For more information about the meeting:

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