

ICE 2017

**THIRTY-THIRD MEETING OF THE
INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS**

Douala, Cameroon, 26-29 September 2017

Concept Note

(Draft)

I. BACKGROUND AND JUSTIFICATION

The Intergovernmental Committee of Experts (ICE) is the organ entrusted with supervision of the activities of the Sub-Regional Office for Central Africa of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (SRO-CA/ECA). It is a forum for exchanges between experts from member states, the two regional economic communities (*ECCAS* and *CEMAC*), and from their specialized agencies, the private sector, researchers, civil society and other technical and financial partners. The ICE meets every year to define and monitor the implementation of the SRO-CA's programme of work, discuss major economic and social development issues and challenges in the sub-region and make appropriate recommendations to address them.

The Thirty-third Session of the ICE will be held from 26 - 29 September 2017 in Douala under the theme "Made in Central Africa: from the vicious circle to the virtuous circle". The choice of this theme is motivated by the observation that with an average real GDP growth rate of about 5 per cent between 2010 and 2015, economic performances neither accelerated the pace of industrialization nor intra-regional trade in Central Africa. In addition, there has been no significant improvement in the living standards of the populations given the limited progress in achieving the MDGs and the ranking of various countries of the sub-region at the bottom of the Human Development Index (HDI).

Analysts agree that the current production system has not generated a virtuous circle of inclusive and sustainable growth, essentially because of the heavy concentration of production factors and resources in least productive activities. This state of affairs prompted the ECA to recommend the acceleration of structural transformation efforts by redirecting productive assets and resources towards more productive sectors, particularly the manufacturing industry and modern services. During the summit of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central African States (CEMAC) held in December 2016 in Yaoundé/Cameroon, Heads of State also "recommended intensification of measures and actions to diversify their economies.

Thus, the theme of the ICE 2017 meeting will be an opportunity to reflect on how to break the vicious circle of non-inclusive growth through the constitution of a diversified and competitive industrial fabric which not only allows a better integration of countries of the sub-regional into international value chains, but also massive creation of decent jobs. Specifically, the meeting will: (i) identify sectors of activities which can serve as basis for the development of such an industrial fabric; (ii) identify major barriers to industrialization; (iii) share experiences and good practices on industrial development in the sub-region and beyond; (iv) appraise the suitability of a sub-regional strategy and/or industrialization action plan for Central Africa and; (v) propose concrete actions for making Central Africa a real growth pole, beyond existing industrial development plans and strategies.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE MEETING

The overarching objective of the thirty-third session of ICE is to review regulatory issues pertaining to the mandate and functioning of the SRO-CA, enable experts to discuss economic and social development issues in Central Africa and, particularly, the development of an industrial fabric in Central Africa as well as propose strategies for accelerating structural transformation of the economies of the sub-region.

The meeting also aims to take stock of the status of implementation of sub-regional, regional and international initiatives and make appropriate recommendations for inclusive and sustainable development in Central Africa. Another objective of the meeting is to review progress made in the implementation of ECA/SRO-CA's 2016 programme of work and provide directions for the implementation of the Office's 2017 programme.

Participants will listen to presentations on the theme of the ICE and consider the following documents: (i) report on the socio-economic situation in Central Africa; (ii) ECA/SRO-CA activity report for 2016 and 2017 programme of work; (iii) annual progress report on regional and international programmes and other specific initiatives in the sub-region; (iv) annual report on sub-regional initiatives devoted to roaming this year; and (v) 2017 edition of the Economic Report on Africa.

The ICE meeting will also afford the opportunity to present the conclusions of the events organized recently by ECA.

III. ORGANIZATION AND FORMAT OF MEETING

The ICE meeting will last four days during which working documents prepared by ECA will be presented for consideration. Countries and partners that so wish, will also present papers. The entire meeting will be conducted in plenary and presentations will be followed by discussions.

The main theme titled "Made in Central Africa: from the vicious circle to the virtuous circle" will be discussed by a high-level panel with focus on: (i) sectors of activities to serve as basis for the development of a diversified and competitive industrial fabric in Central Africa; (ii) major barriers to industrial development as identified by various stakeholders in the sub-region; (iii) experiences and good practices on industrial development in the sub-region and beyond; (iv) the suitability of a sub-regional strategy and industrialization action plan for Central Africa, and (v) concrete actions to be undertaken to make Central Africa a real growth pole by drawing from the experience of African countries that have achieved industrial development. On the margins of the ICE meeting, a diner-meeting on a topic relating to industrial development in the sub-region (26 September 2017) as well as an ad hoc meeting of experts on leveraging agro-industrial potential to support structural transformation in Central Africa and a side event on trade and market access in Central Africa (28-29 September 2017), will also be organized.

IV. EXPECTED RESULTS OF THE MEETING

The ICE meeting will define clear mandates to guide formulation of SRO-CA programmes of work in the years ahead and make recommendations on designing policies geared towards the development of a diversified and competitive industrial fabric for structural transformation of the sub-region. It will also propose ways and means of accelerating implementation of current sub-regional, regional and international initiatives.

In this regard, the following deliverables are expected:

- A transcript of conclusions that will summarize the papers, discussions and their main conclusions and recommendations, notably those that aim to improve the activities carried out by ECA/SRO-CA; the development of activities in high productivity sectors, especially the manufacturing industry in Central Africa and;
- A detailed report of the proceedings.

The meeting will also make proposals for the theme and venue of the next ICE meeting.

V. PARTICIPANTS

Participants in the ICE meeting will include representatives of ministries in charge of planning, economy, industry, mines, trade, and small and medium-sized enterprises (SME). Delegates from the Secretariat General of *ECCAS*, the *CEMAC* Commission, *ECCAS* and *CEMAC*' specialized agencies, and representatives of technical and financial partners such as UNIDO, FAO, UNDP and AfDB, will also attend. The private sector, civil society, universities and research centres in the sub-region will be represented as well.

VI. DATE AND VENUE OF MEETING

The Thirty-third Session of ICE will take place in Douala, Cameroon from 26 to 29 September 2017.

VII. WORKING LANGUAGE

The meeting will be conducted in French, Portuguese and Spanish, with simultaneous interpretation.

VIII. CONTACT PERSONS

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