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and Experts for North Africa**

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**Review of ECA activities in North Africa
(October 2019 - September 2020)**

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I. Introduction

1. This report highlights the activities carried out by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Sub-region office for North Africa Office (SRO-NA) during the period October 2019 to September 2020. This period covers the last quarter of the second year of implementation of the revised 2018-2019 strategic framework from the Expert Committee of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development held in Addis Ababa in May 2018. It also covers the first three quarters of the 2020 annual strategic plan resulting from the Committee of Experts of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development held in Marrakech in March 2019.

2. The activities implemented were carried out in close consultation and collaboration with Member States, ECA headquarters divisions, other sub-regional offices, the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA) and regional economic communities (RECs), agencies of the United Nations system and other partner institutions.

II. The main achievements of the work program during the period under review

3. In the context of the new vision of ECA, SRO-NA formulated a new strategy of specialization launched since 2018 in the field of "Employment, skills and sustainable development". This new strategic orientation aims to help the seven member countries (Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania, Sudan and Tunisia) to design and implement policies and programs capable of promoting the creation of jobs and sustainable development in the perspective of a structural transformation in line with Agendas 2030 and 2063. This aim was embedded into the 2020 strategic plan through the main objective of "stimulating sustainable employment for young people and women in North Africa" with the expected result to "strengthening the capacity of North African countries to identify gaps and introduce innovative job creation".

4. A first challenge has been to support Member States, to strengthen their capacities to appreciate the links and to build a more innovative ecosystem that promotes employment, especially for young people and women.

5. The COVID-19 crisis was a second critical issue for ECA as well as for SRO-NA, knowing that it occurred in the middle of the period under review. In this regard, it was necessary to respond to the concerns of member countries, particularly in terms of assessing the impact of the crisis and adapt as much as possible the implementation of the initial annual work plan.

6. The activities included in the SRO-NA's work program have been carried out to produce results which meet the priority objective as defined while adapting to the challenges outlined above. Recommendations from previous meetings of the Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts (ICSOE) as well as contributions from Member States, UMA and other partners have also helped frame the scope of SRO-NA throughout the period under review.

A. Major result: Strengthen the capacity of North African countries to identify gaps and introduce job creation

7. The major output of SRO-NA's 2020 work plan has been achieved through advisory services and technical assistance to member states in a number of areas in response to requests received from countries. This result has also been accomplished through the production of publications, research papers and policy briefs.

1. Advisory services and technical assistance

8. As part of the operational function of ECA, SRO-NA provided technical assistance and advisory services to member countries in the areas of (i) Analysis of distortions in the allocation of resources to improve productivity and generate new employment opportunities (Morocco); (ii) The implementation of integrated planning and reporting toolkit for the SDGs and Agenda 2063 (Egypt, Morocco); (iii) The formulation of national strategies for the implementation of the AfCFTA (Algeria, Mauritania); (iv) Support the regional implementation of the national

strategy for accelerated growth (Mauritania); (v) Technical support in macroeconomic and economic recovery areas, statistics, regional integration and resource mobilisation (Sudan).

1.1. Advisory services on distortions in resource allocation

9. SRO-NA worked closely with the High Commission for Planning (HCP) in Morocco to assess the level of distortions within the Moroccan economy and their impact on productivity and job creation. This project mobilized a database covering sample of 2000 companies in the manufacturing industry for the years 2006 - 2014. The results of this work made it possible to measure the impact of distortions on productivity.

10. The expected impact of this project is threefold: (i) capacity building to HCP staff to use business data to produce coherent analysis; (ii) create awareness of the importance of distortions, and provide better understanding of their impact on the economy and ways to reduce them; (iii) provide appropriate advice to decision-makers to improve productivity and generate new employment opportunities.

1.2. Technical support to assess countries' performance towards achieving the SDGs

11. The Integrated Planning and Reporting Tool (IPRT) is a web application developed by ECA in response to the needs of African countries to simultaneously adopt and integrate the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Agenda 2063 of the AU in their national development plan and enable them to monitor their progress in a harmonized manner. Following the recommendations of the delegates of the member countries at the ICSOE 2019, SRO-NA started the deployment of the IPRT tool in Egypt and Morocco. In this regard, the ECA team in collaboration with the Egyptian Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, organized in Cairo from January 27 to 30, 2020 a workshop to strengthen capacities in favor of the Egyptian team in charge of monitoring the SDGs. Similarly, the ECA team, in collaboration with the High Commission for Planning in Morocco, organized in Rabat from February 2 to 5, 2020 a capacity building workshop for the Moroccan team in charge of monitoring. of the SDGs.

12. These workshops made it possible to transfer the skills necessary to use the IPRT to enter data, monitor national performance relating to SDG targets and indicators, compare national performance with other countries. Egypt and Morocco have committed to participate and use the IPRT for integrated and harmonized monitoring and evaluation in their national development plan of Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063. It is also planned to start the deployment of this tool in Mauritania and Tunisia from October 2020.

1.3. Advisory services to support countries to build their AfCFTA national strategy

13. SRO-NA, in collaboration with the Ministry of Trade in Mauritania, supported the work of designing and formulating the national strategy for the implementation of the AfCFTA. A national workshop to validate this strategy was organized in this regard on September 17, 2020 with the participation of the public departments involved as well as representatives of the private sector and international organizations. The SRO-NA also supported the work of designing and formulating the national strategy for the implementation of Algeria's AfCFTA. This work is carried out in collaboration with the Algerian Ministry of Trade. It is expected that a first version of this strategy will be available towards the end of the third quarter of 2020.

14. The national strategy for the implementation of the AfCFTA integrates the trade public policies. It facilitates the identification of trade opportunities and constraints, measures including policy interventions as well as capacities necessary to take full advantage of national, regional and global markets. This strategy also makes it possible to define the actions to be undertaken by the country, including those related to institutional arrangements and mechanisms aimed at ensuring full coordination of the implementation and monitoring of the AfCFTA at the national level, taking into account regional perspectives.

1.4. Technical assistance to support Egypt's Production Transformation Policy Review (PTPR)

15. As part of the implementation of Egypt's Production Transformation Policy Review (PTPR), SRO-NA contributed to the work of the Peer Learning Group in a virtual dialogue held on July 1, 2020 under the theme “How to promote manufacturing in an integrated continent?”. The implementation of Egypt's PTPR is the result of collaboration between ECA, UNCTAD, UNIDO, Afreximbank. This meeting made it possible to take stock of the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and to clarify in particular: (i) the provisions and instruments of the AfCFTA that Egypt can use to build regional value chains; (ii) how can Egyptian companies take full advantage of the AfCFTA and meet the challenges they face; (iii) the implications of the COVID-19 crisis on the process of regional integration in Africa; and (iv) lessons learned from other regional integration initiatives in Africa and beyond.

16. The PTPR process studies Egypt's current strategies for transforming production. It makes it possible to propose concrete actions and identify the reforms to be considered. Egypt has also expressed interest in involving Malaysia as a peer to share experiences, challenges and visions in this area.

1.5. Advisory services to develop the Accelerated Growth and Shared Prosperity Strategy (SCAPP) at the regional level

17. Following a technical support mission organized in October 2019, SRO-NA began supporting the Ministry of Economy and the Ministry of the Interior and decentralization of Mauritania to develop the Strategy for Accelerated Growth and Shared Prosperity (SCAPP) for the wilaya region of Hodh Chargui. This strategy is accompanied by a participatory and inclusive priority action plan (2020-2024) and a monitoring-evaluation and reporting framework for this region. A roadmap for the implementation of the project has been agreed with the Ministry of Economy, and a national consulting firm has been selected to support the ministry and the wilaya in the development of the action plan (2020-2024). SRO-NA also conducted a consultative and participatory process with the various development actors at local, regional and national level, including UNCT Mauritania.

18. The wilaya of Hodh Charghi (the largest in the country from a demographic point of view and hosting more than 50,000 refugees mainly from Mali) now has a SCAPP whose main objectives are: (i) Set up a preschool education system adapted to the different contexts of the wilaya; (ii) Improve access, retention, quality of primary and secondary education; (iii) Establish a technical and vocational training system meeting the development needs of the livestock and agriculture sectors and focused on the preservation of natural resources and the protection of the environment; (iv) Improve the conditions of access to quality health and nutrition services and generate demand from the populations; (v) Institutionalize the integration of the gender dimension into sectoral policies and strategies. It is expected that the implementation of the SCAPP at the regional level will help Mauritania to accelerate the process of implementing the SDGs and Agenda 2063. In September 2020, Mauritania made a request to extend the work to four more regions.

1.6. Technical support to Sudan

19. SRO-NA participated in three ECA technical assistance missions to Sudan to support the country on macroeconomic policies, economic recovery, statistics, regional integration and resource mobilization. More specifically, workshop was organized to help build the country's capacity in macroeconomic modeling. A forum was also organized during this mission with the state institutions working on the national recovery program and the SDGs in order to identify the main priorities of the Government. Likewise, a national awareness-raising forum on AfCFTA and its implications for the Sudanese economy was organized. Several senior officials

from ministerial departments have benefited from this technical assistance, including officials from the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, the Central Bank of Sudan, Ministry of Trade, the Central Bureau of Statistics, the Ministry of Health, the National Council. strategic planning and the Ministry of Labor and Social Development.

20. The training on macroeconometric modeling generated very useful policy analysis scenarios for assessing Sudan's transition plans. It was also agreed that ECA will contribute to the project document for the general population and housing census. The project document should benefit from experiences and reflect international practices and standards in this area. The missions also made it possible to agree on the organization of a conference with the development partners to mobilize funds for Sudan. A Donor Coordination and Reporting Committee will be set up in this regard to manage donor relations and disbursements, provide information on the preparation and implementation of projects and review monitoring and evaluation reports. The National Forum on AfCFTA made it possible for its part to emerge a consensus on the need to accelerate Sudan's efforts for the ratification of the agreement and thus to access the next stage of ECA support for the development of its national strategy for the implementation of the AfCFTA.

2. Publications, Research Papers and Policy Briefs

21. As part of the ECA's Think Tank function, the SRO-NA produced a research paper on the fight against youth unemployment in Tunisia. It also issued a policy guidance note on foreign currency mobilization in Sudan and a study on trade facilitation in North Africa as well as a report on the achievement of Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063. in North Africa.

2.1. Research paper on tackling youth unemployment in Tunisia through non-smoking industries: implications for the tourism industry

22. SRO-NA produced a research paper on "Combating youth unemployment in Tunisia through non-smoking industries: implications for the tourism industry". This research examined the current state and paid special attention to the tourism industry, given the importance of this sector in job creation, especially for young people. The study noted a revival of the tourism sector thanks to reinforced security measures, which improved the confidence of tourists, and the enhancement of the natural diversity of the country making holidays in Tunisia more and more attractive. The study established that tourism generates employment and stimulates social change, both directly, through the improvement of education and vocational training in response to the needs of this service industry, and indirectly, through the introduction of new styles of social behavior.

23. This work made it possible to identify policy avenues for Tunisian decision-makers to design and implement measures favorable to employment, in particular: (i) In terms of vocational training, with regard to management skills, organization, communication and IT skills which have become crucial for intermediaries and service providers; (ii) In terms of infrastructure, even Tunisia has made notable progress in terms of road connectivity and rail density, the study notes that there are still many developments to be undertaken in terms of service efficiency (air transport and maritime connectivity as well as internet connectivity and telecommunications infrastructure); (iii) In terms of strengthening links with national industries, given the still underdeveloped network between tourism and other sectors (such as agriculture, related services and construction) which hinders the development of the tourism industry and limits the economic benefits associated with its activities.

2.2. Policy paper on Foreign Currency Mobilization in Sudan

24. SRO-NA has prepared a policy paper to help Sudan mobilize foreign exchange and reduce the deterioration of its national currency. The document assesses the various potential sources that the Sudanese government can use to mobilize foreign exchange. It argues that increasing

the minimum capital requirement of Sudanese banks, improving the capacity of the banking sector to attract remittances through official channels and amending the Mineral Resources Law of 2015 can generate inflows of foreign capital in Sudan in the range of USD 2.5 to 3.3 billion in 2020. This paper was shared with the High-Level Economic Emergency Committee, the Prime Minister office, it forms a basis for the ongoing technical assistance that ECA is currently providing to the Sudanese government.

2.3. Report on trade facilitation in North Africa

25. Following an expert group meeting, SRO-NA published a report on "Trade Facilitation in North Africa for Enhanced Regional Economic Integration: Challenges, Opportunities, and Solutions". This study covers the seven countries of the sub-region. It takes up the challenges of trade facilitation in North Africa and promotes a coordinated sub-regional and global approach aimed at (i) Improving infrastructure and providing efficient and competitive services in the fields of roads, railways, ports, and ICT; (ii) The removal of unjustified roadblocks; and (iii) The simplification and harmonization of customs and border procedures. It also stresses that trade facilitation must address the entire trade chain and processes.

26. This report is expected to contribute to the adoption of an effective way to coordinate actions at the sub-regional level, establish priorities, review progress, mobilize resources, allocate funds and monitor and assess the levels of country contributions. It recommends: (i) Integrating trade facilitation strategies into broader economic strategies; (ii) Develop a regional strategic roadmap for trade facilitation in North Africa; (iii) Adopt a targeted approach to trade facilitation according to concerted priorities; (iv) Broaden the adoption of digitization in regional and national trade facilitation policies; and (v) Focus on regional road infrastructure and rail networks.

2.4. Report on the achievement of Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063 in North Africa

27. SRO-NA produced a report assessing the performance of North African countries towards the achievements of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (Agenda 2030) and Agenda 2063 of the African Union. The analysis of overall performance shows that in terms of SDGs, North African countries rank average compared to all countries. At the level of the African continent, the countries of the sub-region occupy the first four places. Their performance is on average above the African average with regard to the implementation of Agenda 2063. The report notes the significant negative effects of the COVID-19 crisis on growth and employment in these countries. It underlines that the crisis will amplify internal and external imbalances at the risk of jeopardizing the few progress made on the path to achieving the SDGs.

B- SRO-NA response to the COVID-19 crisis

28. In response to the COVID-19 crisis and ad hoc requests from member countries, SRO-NA produced a report on the impact and mitigation strategies of this crisis in North Africa. It also provided an analysis of the socio-economic impact of the pandemic on Algeria as well as on Morocco. SRO-NA also organized a meeting on the \$100 billion initiative to support Africa in the face of the crisis. Furthermore, SRO-NA implemented a service continuity plan, teleworking and virtualization of face-to-face activities to ensure the execution of the 2020 work program.

1. Report on the COVID-19 Crisis in North Africa: Impact and Mitigation Strategies

29. SRO-NA produced a report on the potential socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 crisis in the North African region. This report presents a set of policy options to reduce the negative effects of the crisis and ensure that the needs of vulnerable populations are taken into account. This report describes the socio-economic impacts as well as the critical sectors of economies that could be affected by the crisis.

30. The report identifies a number of mitigation measures as well as policy options that can help stimulate economic recovery and reduce vulnerability in North Africa. It specifies that countries will have to prepare national recovery plans and adopt reforms intended to revitalize the public and private sectors and place them on a new trajectory favoring greater economic diversification. In this perspective, it proposes courses of action through health, fiscal, social solidarity measures and measures relating to the labor market as well as support and partnership with the private sector.

2. Analysis of the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis on Algeria

31. Following a request from the Resident Coordinator of the United Nations system in Algeria, SRO-NA contributed to an assessment of the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the Algerian economy. Using ECA's macroeconomic model, SRO-NA has built a quantitative model assessing the impact of this crisis on GDP, employment, budget deficit as well as the trade balance.

32. This work has been integrated into an overall analysis of the economic and social situation in Algeria. It was given as an example by the Resident Coordinator as an excellent illustration of the work of the United Nations system as "One UN".

3. Report on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on Morocco

33. SRO-NA actively participated in inter-agency consultation at the level of Working Group 3 aimed at facilitating dialogue within the UNCT Morocco and making contributions to the economic and social impact of the pandemic. In cooperation with the World Bank, UNDP and HCP, SRO-NA prepared a report on the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis on Morocco.

34. This report formed a basis for the preparation of a strategic partnership with the Government of Morocco, represented by the High Commission for Planning. The work of Working Group 3 also contributed to the development of the Socioeconomic Response Plan (SERP) developed by UNCT Morocco.

4. Webinar on the \$100 billion initiative to support Africa in the face of the COVID-19 crisis

35. ECA coordinated a series of meetings for the African Ministers of Finance between March and September 2020. Ministers underscored the heavy toll that the global economic downturn is taking on the African economy, implying an urgent need for fiscal stimulus to contain the economic effects of the crisis. Ministers agreed on the need for an immediate emergency economic stimulus to the tune of \$100 billion. As such, interest payments, estimated at \$44 billion in 2020, and possible extension of debt suspension over the medium term would provide immediate fiscal space and liquidity to governments. In addition, ministers underscored the need to support the private sector and protect more than 30 million jobs at risk across the continent.

36. In this context, SRO-NA, in collaboration with the Policy Center for the New South, organized a virtual meeting to present and discuss the "\$100 billion initiative to support Africa". This meeting was co-hosted by HE Ms. Sherine Elsharkawy, Deputy Minister of Finance (Egypt), Mr. Mubarak Lo, Special Advisor and Chief Economist to the Prime Minister of Senegal as well as Mr. Khaled Hussein, Acting Director of SRO-NA. Discussions focused on the economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis, on national finances in Africa and the measures needed for African countries to improve their access to liquidity.

5. Implementation of the service continuity plan, teleworking and virtualization of face-to-face activities by the SRO-NA

37. From the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, SRO-NA began activating its business continuity plan initially designed to deal with emergencies and crises. This plan covers aspects relating to maintaining the implementation and organization of business activities and support activities. Real-life simulations were carried out to make the necessary adjustments and prepare for the period of the health emergency that was becoming more and more likely every day. The SRO-NA thus continued to function as normally as possible by combining face-to-face work with remote work while ensuring regular coordination and rigorous monitoring of activities.

38. As soon as the state of emergency and generalized containment was established in Morocco, the necessary prerequisites to ensure the continuity of service were in place and the SRO-NA's activity has not experienced any interruptions in terms of internal functioning and the implementation of the work program. The meetings that were initially planned in face-to-face mode during the period of the health emergency have been revised and adapted to the remote working mode. More appropriate technical solutions have also been adopted in coordination with ECA headquarters in order to ensure a level of quality comparable to face-to-face mode. SRO-NA has thus mobilized other means such as videoconferencing to carry out certain activities of the work program, in particular workshops and meetings with representatives of member countries.

III. Special initiatives, interactions with headquarters' divisions and partnerships

39. During the period under review, SRO-NA took part in a number of special initiatives. It also mobilized the expertise of ECA headquarters' divisions in favor of member countries within the framework of joint programming. SRO-NA also continued and strengthened its partnerships with the United Nations system and development partners as well as with Universities, Research Centers and Think tanks..

A. Special Initiatives

40. SRO-NA participated in number of ECA and partners activities and meetings (conferences, workshops and meetings) to support member countries:

- In October 2019, SRO-NA participated in the national conference on the AfCFTA, Algeria, following the invitation of the Algerian Ministry of Trade. SRO-NA focused on ECA's work on trade facilitation. The empirical evidence presented shows that African countries have very high potential to gain from the implementation of trade facilitation measures, especially in the context of AfCFTA. The presentation highlighted that AfCFTA could also have positive effects for North Africa by removing constraints related to supply and inclusion in regional value chains. On this basis, it was emphasized that Algeria's national strategy should provide a clear vision on the way forward to better take advantage of the potential of inter-African trade and present the necessary reforms so that the country can effectively benefit from the implementation of AfCFTA;
- In October 2019, SRO-NA participated in the 2nd International Conference of Justice in Marrakech "Justice and investment: challenges and issues" organized by the Moroccan Ministry of Justice in collaboration with the Supreme Council of the Magistracy. The conference addressed the role of justice in establishing and maintaining a business environment conducive to investment and business. The conference provided an opportunity to discuss the complex link between a well-functioning justice system and a supportive business environment. Participants confirmed that a fair, transparent and rules-based justice system is a key factor in stimulating foreign investment, business development, and generating economic

growth and prosperity. They also concluded that digitization requires new skills among justice system personnel at all levels. The need to adapt legal texts was also noted in order to ensure efficient use of data while ensuring respect for privacy and confidentiality;

- In February 2020, SRO-NA participated in the sixth session of the African Regional Forum for Sustainable Development, Victoria Falls (Zimbabwe). The conference made it possible to assess the progress made in the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the African Union's Agenda 2063 and to provide high-level guidance to accelerate their implementation across the continent. At the end of this conference, African ministers adopted the "Victoria Falls" Declaration to accelerate the implementation of the Decade of Action for Sustainable Development in Africa;
- SRO-NA took part in the meeting of the Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) for Africa, Victoria Falls (Zimbabwe). This meeting provided an opportunity to examine the reforms underway within the United Nations and the African Union. This session also recalled that the theme of the African Union for 2020, “Silencing the guns: creating the conditions conducive to the development of Africa”, remains essential for the development process and the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. This meeting, chaired by Ms. Amina J. Mohammed Deputy Secretary General of the United Nations, laid the foundations for the reform of the Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) for Africa;
- In May 2020, SRO-NA contributed to an international webinar organized by the Tangier National School of Business and Management entitled “Africa and COVID-19”, with a presentation on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on Africa North, with a focus on North African Diaspora remittances. This conference allowed experts from the continent to discuss the experiences of different countries facing the impact of the COVID-19 crisis.
- In May 2020, in the ECA virtual meeting on regional responses to the COVID-19 crisis and the imperative of accelerated health integration in Africa, SRO-NA made a presentation of a report on “The COVID-19 Crisis in North Africa: Impact and Mitigation Strategies”;
- In June 2020, SRO-NA contributed to the workshop organized by Brookings Institution on youth employment in non-smoking industries with the presentation of a research paper on "the fight against youth unemployment in Tunisia through non-polluting industries: implications for the tourism industry" and the contribution to the discussion of the Senegal case study;
- In June 2020 with the Think Tank Policy Center for the New South, SRO-NA organized a webinar on "the structural transformation of the Moroccan economy: before and after COVID-19". Discussions focused on distortions, structural transformation and the possibilities for Morocco to adapt and accelerate its structural transformation in the post COVID-19 context;
- In September 2020, the SRO-NA participated in the launch of the report as well as in the regional dialogue on clean energy transitions in North Africa. This virtual meeting provided an opportunity to take stock of the region's progress and best practices in terms of clean energy transitions to better inform and help decision-makers in this area. It was also an opportunity to exchange thoughts on the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic in the energy sector in North Africa. This dialogue explored ways to make clean energy transition policies a priority in economic recovery plans. On this occasion the SRO-NA presented avenues for further developing sub-regional cooperation in this area.

B. Interactions with Headquarters' Divisions

41. As part of the implementation of the principle of joint programming, SRO-NA maintains sustained interactions with the divisions at ECA headquarters. This allows a better mobilization and promotion of the expertise of ECA, in particular to better respond to the demands of North African member countries.

42. As such, the advisory services provided to Mauritania for the implementation of the accelerated growth strategy at the regional level are conducted in collaboration with the African Center for Statistics (ACS) and the Gender, Poverty Division. and the Social Policy (GPSPD). Technical assistance for the design of the national implementation strategy of the AfCFTA in favor of Algeria and Mauritania as well as the support of Egypt in the process of the peer learning group of the Production Transformation Policy Reviews (PTPR) are being conducted in collaboration with the Regional Integration and Trade Division (RITD) and the African Center for Trade Policy (ATPC) of ECA.

43. SRO-NA is also leading a project with the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP) to build the capacity of decision-makers for the design and implementation of policies to boost employment. The advisory services provided to Egypt and Morocco in favor of the implementation of the SDGs through the deployment of the integrated planning and reporting tool "IPRT" are carried out in collaboration with the Macroeconomics division. and Governance (MGD), ACS and the Information and Communication Services and Technologies (ITCSS) section of the ECA.

44. In addition, support to member countries for the use of ECA's macroeconomic model to produce better economic forecasts is led by SRO-NA in collaboration with the Division of Macroeconomics and Governance (MGD). SRO-NA has also initiated a technical assistance project to meet the migration-related goals of the SDGs and the 2018 Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in collaboration with the GPSPD and ACS divisions of the ECA. It also participated in February 2020 in Arusha (Tanzania) in the meeting of the steering committee of the African Center for Trade Policy (ATPC). This participation in this meeting made it possible to examine and include the sub-region of North Africa in the work program of the Center for 2020. In addition, an arrangement was agreed with ATPC to financing AfCFTA work programme in North Africa for the period 2020-2021.

45. SRO-NA also took part in October 2019 in the 2021 work plan preparation workshop organized by the Strategic Planning, Monitoring and Results Division (SPORD) of ECA. A series of exchanges and adjustments followed with this division which resulted in the finalization of the 2021 work program. During the period under review, SRO-NA also participated in all the sessions organized by SPORD for the quarterly review of program performance and accountability (APPR) in the presence of the Executive Secretary and all ECA divisions.

C. Partnerships

1. Partnerships with the United Nations system and other development partners

46. SRO-NA has regularly participated in the periodic meetings of the UNCTs of the countries of the sub-region. These meetings allowed the exchange of information between the various United Nations agencies and above all to present the activities undertaken by ECA at the regional level and to discuss potential synergies with national projects. This constitutes a priority for the United Nations reforms to better coordinate and align interventions at different levels to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs. During the period under review, SRO-NA provided ad hoc technical support to the Offices of Resident Coordinators (RCs) following requests as well as supported the preparation of Common Country Assessment (CCA).

47. SRO-NA prepared a proposal for UNCT Morocco on the design of a new development model for the country. It also made a presentation in March 2020 to UNCT Morocco on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis and the \$100 billion initiative to support Africa to cope with the consequences of the pandemic. As part of the inter-agency consultation and at the level of Working Group 3, SRO-NA participated in the preparation of a strategic note on the social and economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis in Morocco. 48. SRO-NA also conducted an analysis on behalf of UNCT Algeria on macroeconomic balances and solutions to stimulate growth. It also made a presentation on the achievement of the SDGs in North Africa and following a request from the RC in Algeria, SRO-NA contributed to an assessment work of the impact of the COVID crisis -19 on the Algerian economy.

49. In January 2020, SRO-NA made presentation during UNCT Egypt retreat on “Decade of Actions: Ten Years to Achieve the SDGs”. SRO-NA has contributed to CCA Egypt by analyzing the structural transformation of the Egyptian economy. This analysis highlights the weak productivity growth and structural transformation of the Egyptian economy. It underlines the need to remedy many important distortions.

50. The Resident Coordinator in Mauritania requested technical support from ECA in the preparation of the CCA. In this regard, it was agreed that SRO-NA takes the lead of the thematic group of regional perspectives (security, migration, trade with ECOWAS agreements, AfCFTA). Through the technical support of the Ministry of Social Affairs, Children and Family (MASEF), the Office is expected to contribute to macroeconomic analysis, trade and regional integration, SDGs and development. sustainability as well as the analysis of the institutionalization of gender equality.

51. SRO-NA is also working closely with UNCT Tunisia to finalize the CCA and launch the UNSDCF (United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework) for which the strategic priorities have been defined within the framework of 5 main challenges and 10 expected results. The terms of reference were developed to define the role of the UNCT in holding workshops with the Government and development partners for the preparation and drafting of the UNSDCF. SRO-NA took the lead, in collaboration with ESCWA, on the thematic part of growth and economic transformation.

52. In partnership with the ILO, UNDESA, IOM, SRO-NA has developed a regional program to provide technical assistance to six African countries including Morocco to support them to implement the Global Compact for safe, orderly and regular migration. This project, will focus on capacity building related to migration statistics as well as the mutual recognition of skills of migrants on the African continent.

53. SRO-NA further took part in February 2020 in Casablanca (Morocco) in the training workshop on Negotiating Techniques for Trade in Services in OIC Member Countries, organized by the Islamic Center for trade development (ICDT). The workshop meant to strengthen the capacities of member states in the area of negotiating services at the level of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), in order to stimulate trade intra-OIC and contribute to the economic development of member countries. The office for its part made a presentation on "Trade in liberalizing services at the regional level: The Case of AfCFTA". It also discussed potential areas of collaboration with the Center as well as ways of working with UNCTAD and other experts in the preparation of a regional workshop on trade in services.

2. Partnerships with Institutions, Universities, Research Centers and Think tanks

54. The objective of these partnerships is to strengthen cooperation and exchange expertise between ECA, institutions, universities and research centers, and to undertake concerted actions with a view to defining the framework for future initiatives and joint actions useful to the parties. For ECA, these partnerships aim to develop close collaboration with institutions in order to better meet the needs of the member countries of North Africa through the sharing of knowledge and experiences that support the decision-making processes in development policies.

55. Partnership with the Policy Center for the New South on employment through south-south cooperation. This partnership was translated into the organization of three webinars on number of development issues including structural transformation, external debt, and innovation and new technology.

56. An agreement was concluded with the High Commission for Planning (HCP), to define the reference framework for cooperation between this institution and SRO-NA and to establish a working relationship to support and encourage the sharing of knowledge and information between the two institutions. It will also strengthen South-South cooperation with other countries on the African continent.

57. A partnership has been developed with the Brookings Institution, a public body based in Washington DC (USA), whose mission is to conduct in-depth research aimed at generating new ideas for addressing societal issues at the local, national and global levels. During the period under review, this partnership was concretized by research on "the fight against youth unemployment in Tunisia through non-smoking industries: implications for the tourism industry". This research was then presented by SRO-NA in June 2020 at a workshop hosted by the Brookings Institution on Youth Employment and Industries without Smokestacks.

58. Within the framework of agreements with Universities and Research Centers, SRO-NA has contributed to academic research:

- Co-supervision of a master's research thesis on the evaluation of the potential for job creation in non-smoking industries through the calculation of employment elasticities to growth in Egypt and Morocco, then by identifying key sectors through an input-output analysis. This analysis identifies the potential for job creation in different sectors of the Egyptian and Moroccan economies;
- Co-supervision of two master's theses within the framework of the projects of the National Institute of Statistics and Applied Economics (INSEA) in Rabat (Morocco). The first thesis focuses on the COVID-19 crisis in North Africa, the second focuses on the middle-income countries trap in which the sub-region is located.

59. SRO-NA has also started new discussions with other institutions and research centers with a view to concluding new agreements and diversifying its portfolio of research partnership relationships at the sub-region level.

IV. Status of the implementation of the recommendations of the 34th ICSEO

60. The implementation of the 34th ICE recommendations addressed to ECA was an integral part of the 2020 work program. Several recommendations have been addressed in Part II of this report. However, to comply with the request of the Member States, the most significant achievements are listed below:

A- Recommendations for the special session on the theme: "The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and employment"

a) Strengthen the capacities of member countries to understand and measure the expected impact of the AfCFTA on North African economies;

61. SRO-NA organized in November 2019, in partnership with the General Secretariat of the UMA, a regional seminar on the potential impact of the AfCFTA on the economies of the Maghreb. The seminar was marked by the participation of representatives from member countries, civil society, the private sector and experts from the sub-region. This seminar enabled the countries of the sub-region to better understand the opportunities and implications of the AfCFTA for their economies, to present the capacity of the AfCFTA to achieve the objectives of regional integration in North Africa and to encourage the countries to act by integrating and coordinating their national strategy for the implementation of the zone and by strengthening their participation in the construction of the single African market.

c) Promote the production of trade knowledge and set up electronic platforms to facilitate its dissemination;

62. SRO-NA published a report on “Trade Facilitation in North Africa for Enhanced Regional Economic Integration: Challenges, Opportunities, and Solutions”. This study covers the seven countries of the sub-region. It takes up the challenges of trade facilitation in North Africa and promotes a coordinated sub-regional and global approach aimed at improving infrastructure and providing efficient and competitive services. In particular, it advocates broadening the adoption of digitization in regional and national trade facilitation policies.

B- Recommendations related to the sub-regional profile

a) Design and set up a mechanism for collecting the national data, including a precise timetable, necessary for the production of the sub-regional profile;

63. An outline of the main social and macroeconomic data required for data collection was sent in February 2020 to the focal points of the member countries. Despite sending several reminders to member countries focal points, only Morocco sent its response to this request. SRO-NA advocates in this regard to agree with member countries to put in place a more reliable and systematic mechanism for data collection.

b) Incorporate consideration of other complementary dimensions, such as monetary and multidimensional poverty and achievements in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals, in the social development analysis part of the report;

64. Following this recommendation, it was agreed to devote the next regional report on International Agendas to the analysis of the implementation of the sustainable development goals in the sub-region. This report will be presented to member countries during the 35th session of the ICE.

c) Include in the report other complementary indicators or alternatives to the Human Development Index (HDI) produced by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP);

65. This year's sub-regional profile focused on the exceptional COVID-19 crisis. The SRO-NA has developed vulnerability index composed of eight categories including, in particular, indicators related to health capacity and economic vulnerability of the population. The objective of the index is to reveal the sources of vulnerability to pandemic risk compared to other countries in the world (this index being established for 149 countries at the global level).

d) Deepen the analysis of the causes of the discrepancies between the various situations observed in the countries of the sub-region;

66. In addition to the sub-regional profile, an extensive report has been prepared to address, among other things, the differences between the countries as well as the structural weaknesses of the sub-region. It proposes reforms taking into account the impact induced by the COVID-19 crisis.

C- Recommendations related to the report on the implementation of regional and international development programs and special initiatives in North Africa

a) Deepen and enrich the report by consulting member countries on activities carried out at national level in relation to commitments made and participation in conferences;

67. On the basis of this recommendation, it was agreed to devote the regional report on the Agendas to the analysis of the implementation of the sustainable development goals in the sub-region. To do this, SRO-NA has set up a participatory process that has made it possible to systematically consult with member countries and UNCTs in order to collect data as well as make reference to recent reports on national development processes.

b) Improve the capacities of member countries to use unified instruments and methodologies to ensure the monitoring and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

68. The regional report on the implementation of the sustainable development objectives in the sub-region gives recommendations aimed at improving monitoring at the national level. To strengthen national capacities, ECA has developed the Integrated Planning and Reporting Tool (IPRT), a web application to meet the needs of African countries to simultaneously adopt and integrate the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development and the AU's Agenda 2063 in their national development plan and enable them to monitor their progress in a harmonized manner. SRO-NA has already started the deployment of the IPRT tool in Egypt and Morocco. It also plans to start the deployment of this tool in October 2020 in Mauritania and Tunisia.

D- Recommendation on the Economic Commission for Africa's program of work for 2020

a) Facilitate the sharing of lessons learned and good practices from the activities and support programs of the various partners at national, regional and continental levels to promote synergy and avoid duplication, wastage of resources and program overlaps.

69. SRO-NA endeavors to ensure the participation in the work of the Commission of experts from all countries of the sub-region. It also seeks to strengthen the sharing of experiences and the dissemination of good practices through their modeling and to promote south-south cooperation and the networking of experts in the sub-region through the use of a platform for knowledge management and communication actions.

V. Challenges and lessons learned

A. COVID-19 crisis

70. The COVID-19 crisis has postponed the implementation of some SRO-NA activities that were initially planned under normal conditions. Some face-to-face activities, including technical support missions, were affected. In this regard, the office has implemented a number of mitigation measures: (i) Review of the work program to modify the mode of implementation in response to the ongoing crisis; (ii) Promotion of virtual meetings and webinars whenever it has been useful to do so; (iii) Postponement of planned activities requiring the presence of stakeholders until a better situation is restored; (iv) Activation of the service continuity plan as well as teleworking by ensuring regular and rigorous monitoring of activities.

B. Access to Data

71. One of the challenges facing SRO-NA is limited access to relevant data and information from member states. Despite the promotion of open data by some member countries, data is still difficult to access. The access is mainly dependent on the quality the relationships with interlocutors and not on institutional arrangements between the SRO-NA and its partners. This issue, which has been submitted to member states on a regular basis at the ICSOE, remains unresolved.

C. Mobilization of external expertise

72. The identification and recruitment of external experts is a lengthy process and contributes to the lag in the implementation of SRO-NA activities compared to the initial planning. The centralization of the procedures for recruiting external consultants and experts as well as the coordination between SRO-NA and ECA headquarters generate recurring difficulties. However, the work programme, in particular the organization of expert group meetings, systematically assumes the establishment of this type of prerequisite within the time limits prescribed by the work plan. This situation impacts SRO-NA's ability to produce studies and research on time, to verify quality assurance according to procedures in force and to share them with stakeholders in good time prior to expert meetings.

D. Regional Integration

73. The dynamics of Maghreb integration remain limited. The trade among the Arab Maghreb Union is very little within its borders. In 2018, only 3.34% of exports from AMU member countries are intended for the Maghreb market, which represents an extremely low share given the performance recorded by other Regional Economic Communities on the African continent and the potential of this region. With the exception of 2018, the evolution over the past few years has been negative: intra-Maghreb trade has been steadily declining since 2013.

E. Instability in the sub-region

74. The subregion continues to face many challenges, particularly at the political and security level. It continues to be marked by the effects of changes brought about by protest movements and periods of political transition. The sub-region is also facing regional geopolitical tensions, which have serious security consequences considerably limiting its development prospects. In this regard, it should be stressed that all the countries of the sub-region need to strengthen good governance, in particular economic governance, which in fine could reduce social imbalances as well as political instability which remains a problem. real hurdle for development.

75. The instability and political transitions in North Africa also result in a low level of implementation of the recommendations and proposed policy changes, as countries subject to these constraints remain focused on short-term security challenges and political instability. These factors have also hampered the work and activities of ECA in these countries.