



Rabat, 22nd February 2013

Press Release

Rabat hosts the 28th session of ECA's Intergovernmental Committee of Experts

Transforming Economies to Boost Growth and Employment

The Office for North Africa of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA/ SRO NA) is convening the 28th session of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts (ICE) in Rabat, Morocco, from 26 February to 1 March 2013. This four day gathering will focus on a topic that is crucial for the sub region: "Promoting diversification and sophistication to achieve the structural transformation of North Africa economies".

ICE is the deliberative organ of ECA's Office for North Africa and is made up of the membership of Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Sudan and Tunisia. It meets on an annual basis and is mandated to take stock of ECA's work in North Africa and give guidance as to its strategic orientations and scope. The meeting is expected to examine a series of reports prepared by the Office including the 2011-2012 Economic and Social Report and The MDGs Implementation Evaluation Report.

This statutory get together is a timely opportunity for participants to exchange views on the major challenges the region is currently facing and mull over development strategies that need to be implemented to upscale the countries' economic and social performances. It is also an opportunity for participants to identify ways and means to stimulate regional integration.

Addressing the challenges faced by North Africa is all the more needed as the sub-region is experiencing a context that is marked by lengthy political transitions in some countries, insufficient growth that does not generate enough employment , rising insecurity and economic recession in a number of countries in the European Union, considered to be North Africa's main partner in trade.

To further analyze this context and deepen the understanding of the various aspects linked to its topical theme chosen for this year, ICE 28th session will also include an ad hoc Expert Group Meeting on "Sophistication and diversification for the structural transformation of North Africa economies." Selecting this specific theme is dictated by the need for the region to upgrade the economies of its various member countries to the status of emerging economies. Such an objective can only be attained through the effective structural transformation of these economies.

Over the past decade, North Africa countries have achieved moderate growth rates not exceeding 4%, while East Asia and the Pacific recorded growth rates neighbouring 8.5%. Such growth rates reached by our countries are insufficient, given the daunting challenges they are facing in terms of alleviation of employment and job creation for young people.

Recent studies established the empirical evidence that sophistication of exports plays a crucial role in sustainable growth. The ad-hoc Expert group meeting will discuss the role the State as well as other economic actors can play in the structural transformation of national economies. The recommendations expected to come out of this discussion will be submitted to the upcoming ECA's Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development that will be held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire from 21st to 26 March 2013.