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Twenty-Eighth Meeting of the Intergovernmental
Committee of Experts (ICE)

Rabat (Morocco)
26th February – 1st March 2013

**Theme : *"Promoting diversification and sophistication for the
structural transformation of North African economies"***

Aide-memoire

I. SCOPE AND BACKGROUND

The Intergovernmental Committee of Experts (ICE) is the statutory deliberating organ of the Office for North Africa, of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA/SRO-NA). It is in charge of the supervision of the office activities and meets annually to : (i) review the report of activities of (ECA/SRO-NA); (ii) review short and medium term action plans, the programme of work and strategic orientations of the ECA for the sub-region of North Africa.

The ICE is the formal framework of analysis and exchange between experts from national administrations, regional economic communities operating in the sub-region (AMU, CEN-SAD), researchers, stakeholders of the private sector and civil society, about the economic and social conditions in the sub-region, in order to elaborate recommendations on national strategies for development and enhancing the regional integration in North Africa.

The 28th session of the ICE will be held in Rabat (Kingdom of Morocco) from February 26 to March 1st, 2013, in a regional environment characterized by the continuous political transition in some countries of the sub-region, the persistence of the crisis of sovereign debts and public deficits in many European Countries, a very weak growth in European Union economies – the main trade partner for North Africa, and the expansion of security risks in the sahel-saharan region. Considering these various factors, the consequences of which are self-perpetuating and interacting among each other, continue to have negative impacts on the economic and social performance in the countries of the sub-region, mainly on growth, exportations, foreign direct investments, tourism and employment.

The ICE meeting will be an opportunity for reflections, analysis and suggestions on the ways and means to durably overcome the challenges that are facing the sub-region countries, in particular those relating to political and institutional reforms triggered by the events of 2011-2012, structural change of economies for a more sustainable growth that generates more employment, building an integrated economic space, a sustainable and a more inclusive development. In this regard, a round table is included in the agenda of the ICE with the theme: "*Promoting diversification and sophistication for the structural transformation of North African Economies*", in line with the theme of the next conference of African ministers in charge of economic development.

The choice of this theme arises from the finding that the accession of North African countries to the emerging economies category, comes through a huge transformation of their economies, and raises the question of processes to guide these structural changes. The insufficient growth in North Africa and the relatively slow social and economic development that this growth triggers, were in part due to the weak diversification of these economies and the low degree of sophistication of productive systems.

Performances of the most economies of the sub-region countries, mainly based on the exploitation of natural resources, are largely dependent on raw materials prices or on climate changes. The instability of raw materials and food products prices, associated to the multiple crises in the last five years, had slowed down the growth and revealed the huge vulnerability of North African economies to external shocks, despite their low degree of integration in the world markets, stressing therefore on the necessity of a structural transformation of these economies.

In order to expand the suggested theme, in parallel to this ICE session, there will be held an ad hoc meeting of experts on the "*Sophistication and diversification of North African economies*". Experiences of both developed and emerging countries will be examined, in particular, the Asian ones show that the accession of countries with low revenue to an intermediary revenues category, then to an emerging economy comes through a significant diversification of the economy; they also insist on the role of the government in this process, by stimulating high evolution that the market is unable to create automatically through resources allocation, due to its imperfections and weaknesses, in particular within developing countries. The ad hoc meeting of experts will offer the opportunity to analyzing various aspects of this question, namely the current status of diversification and sophistication in the sub-region, their factors, the relation between sophistication, productivity and growth, and the role that can be played by the regional integration in this regard, the role of states and other stakeholders, namely the private sector and academicians.

In addition, the agenda of the ICE will include a special session on regional integration in North Africa. It will be an opportunity for participants to exchange on the perspectives to re-boost the Maghreb integration in whole, with a particular emphasis on facilitating trade and inter-states goods transport-transit.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE MEETING

The general objective of the ICE Meeting is to analyze the recent development and trends of socio-economic conditions in North Africa, in order to elaborate suitable recommendations on policies and strategies for a sustainable development and a more significant integration of the economies of the sub-region countries.

To that end, the meeting will review several reports, namely : (i) the report on economic and social conditions in 2011-2012 and perspectives of regional integration in North Africa; (ii) Report on implementation of the multi-annual program for cooperation ECA-MAU; (iii) Report on the implementation of the MDGs and the perspectives for beyond 2015 ; (iv) Report on regional and international agendas, including special initiatives in North Africa ; (v) Report on the ad hoc meeting of experts on the "*Sophistication and diversification of North African economies*" ; (vi) Report on annual activities of ECA in North Africa and the work program of the office for 2013. The meeting will also debate on other subjects of concern for the sub-region countries, in the perspective to intensify the integration in North Africa.

Finally, the meeting will elaborate recommendations to be submitted to the sixth joint meeting of the Conference of Ministers of economy and finance of African Union and the conference of African ministers of finance, planning and economic development of the ECA.

III. EXPECTED RESULTS OF THE MEETING

It is expected from the ICE Meeting to enrich and adopt the reports that will be presented by the ECA/SRO-NA, and to elaborate recommendations of policies and strategies to the attention of decision makers, for the establishment of national development programs and for the acceleration of the process of regional integration. A detailed report of the meeting will synthesize the presentations, debates and enrichments to bring to documents submitted, main conclusions and recommendations.

The report of the meeting will be transmitted to the sixth joint meeting of the Conference of Ministers of economy and finance of African Union and the conference of African ministers of finance, planning and economic development of the ECA.

IV. ORGANIZATION OF THE MEETING AND METHOD OF WORK

The meeting will be held through plenary sessions and a round table where technical reports elaborated by the office and communications of eminent personalities will be presented and discussed. These reports will be published on the web site of ECA/SRO-NA (www.uneca.org/sro/an).

V. PARTICIPATION

Participation to the Experts Committee meeting is open mainly to ministries, national administrations and institutions in charge of planning and economic and social development, regional integration, industry, agriculture, energy, to representatives of the Secretariat General of the MAU, of the Secretariat General of CEN-SAD and other intergovernmental organizations existing in North Africa, to representatives of the private sector and civil society, to universities and research centers, to the United Nations agencies and to other partners of the development of the sub-region.

VI. DATE AND VENUE OF THE MEETING

The meeting will be held from February 26th to March 1st 2013 in Rabat (Morocco).

VII. LANGUAGES OF THE MEETING

The languages of the meeting will be French, English and Arabic.

VIII. CONTACTS

Information relating to the organization of the meeting are available on the web site of the Office for North Africa of the ECA or from:

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