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Thirty-First session of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts (ICE)

Rabat (Morocco)
1 – 4 March 2016

Under the Theme:

“Green Economy to Accelerate Industrialization in North Africa”

Aide-Memoire

I. Background

The Intergovernmental Committee of Experts (ICE) is the statutory decision-making body of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa Office for North Africa (ECA-NA). The ICE is in charge of supervising the office activities and meets annually to review the ECA-NA activity report, short and medium term action plans, program of work and strategic orientations. As a reminder, the main mission of the Office is to “*strengthen the capacity of member States [...] to ensure their socioeconomic development, especially with regard to the regional priorities in terms of integration into the general framework of NEPAD and the internationally agreed development goals [...]*” ; its territorial jurisdiction covers Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Sudan and Tunisia. The Arab Maghreb Union (UMA) is the sub-region’s regional economic community (REC).

The ICE is the formal framework for analysis and exchange between high-level, national administration experts, researchers, private sector and civil society representatives. Participants examine economic and social conditions in North Africa in order to elaborate recommendations on national development strategies and enhance regional integration.

Like the two previous meetings, the 31st session of the ICE, due to take place on 1-4 March 2016 in Rabat (Kingdom of Morocco), is part of the new ECA strategic orientation, based on the African economies structural transformation agenda and the African Vision for development and integration in Africa.

The meeting will be held against a regional backdrop mainly characterized by the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the culmination of the political transition process in two out of three countries of the sub-region who had made such a commitment and persistent security risks in a large proportion of the Sahelo-Saharan region. These various factors have inter-acting effects; they also impact, at varying degrees, the economic and social performance levels of the countries across the sub-region, and especially growth patterns, exports, foreign direct investments, tourism industry and employment.

The general theme of the 31st ICE meeting is: “*Green Economy to Accelerate Industrialization in North Africa*”.

This theme ties in with ongoing ECA analyses, initiated in 2012, on the determinants of a more sustained industrialization of Africa, a prerequisite for the Continent's structural transformation and social development. After the optimization of basic commodities and other natural resources in 2013, the selection of policies and institutional frameworks in 2014 and discussions in 2015 on the role of trade as a means of speeding up the industrialization process, it is now time to focus on a path deemed to be among the surest ways of industrializing the Continent without threatening the future. In a context characterized by scarce natural resources and deeper awareness of climate change effects, there is growing recognition that the industrialization of Africa, as necessary as it may be, can no longer be done having in mind solely budget optimization and financial returns to investors. To ensure a human-centered development, the massive industrialization advocated by the ECA for the Continent must go hand in hand with the optimal management of natural resources and of the innovations promoting and supporting intergenerational equity.

The international context has also been marked by the works of the Paris Conference on Climate (COP21) which led to the adoption, by 195 countries, of a universal legally binding agreement on climate. One of the important outcomes of this Summit was the launch of an African initiative for the development of renewable energies. This initiative's targets include the construction of at least 10 gigawatts/year of new production capacities by 2020 and 300 gigawatts by 2030. This initiative will be a step towards the Continent's green industrialization although recent efforts by North African countries have shown that they have taken the lead in both the design and implementation of green industry development strategies. The meeting will provide an opportunity to discuss the challenges and issues of green industrialization as a vector for the structural transformation of North African economies.

The objectives of the EGM panel discussion / ad hoc meeting organized jointly with the ICE, under the theme: ***“Industrialization through trade in North Africa in the Context of the Continental Free Trade Area and Mega Trade Agreements”***. Session goals include identifying the conditions required to ensure trade liberalization becomes an actual industrialization factor in Africa, to stimulate intra-African trade, foster the emergence of growth drivers in strategic industrial sectors, but also to turn the RECs preferential agreements into tools for the promotion of the regional value chains. This calls for the prior identification of lasting trade and income-generating effects options for North African countries facing multiple free-trade agreements, some of which have come into force and others are still under discussion.

The themes of both the ICE meeting and the EGM panel discussion/ad hoc meeting will provide member countries' delegates and eminent experts with the opportunity to share reflections and suggest ways and means for the countries across the sub region to meet development challenges in a sustainable way.

II. MEETING OBJECTIVES

The specific objective of the ICE meeting is to analyze the current status and the changing trends of North African countries' main macro-economic and social aggregates, in order to make appropriate recommendations on policies and strategies for a more sustainable and inclusive development, greater integration and structural transformation of the economies of the sub region.

For this purpose, the meeting will examine several reports, including: (i) the report on the recent evolution of the economic and social conditions in North Africa; (ii) the report on the regional and international agendas, including the special initiatives in North Africa; (iii) the ECA Annual Report of the activities in North Africa and the draft Strategic Framework for 2018-2019.

The meeting recommendations will be submitted to the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, deliberative body of the ECA.

III. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The ICE meeting is expected to enrich and adopt ECA-NA reports, come up with policy and strategy recommendations for decision-makers to facilitate the design of national development programs and support the acceleration of the regional integration process. A detailed meeting report will summarize the presentations, debates and improvements to be made to the documents submitted the main conclusions and recommendations.

The meeting report will be submitted to the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, deliberative body of the ECA.

IV. ORGANIZATION AND FORMAT OF THE MEETING

The 30th ICE session will be held in the form of plenary sessions and a panel discussion meeting. Participants will be presented with ECA-NA, they will also attend and discuss presentations by eminent experts. Member countries will be sent the final version of the reports.

V. ATTENDANCE

Participation in the Experts Committee meeting is open to ministries, national administrations and institutions in charge of planning and economic and social development, regional integration bodies, industry, agriculture, energy, environment, social development, representatives of the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA) General Secretariat and other North Africa-based IGOs, representatives from private sector organizations and civil society, academia and research centers, agencies of the United Nations System and other development partners in the sub region.

VI. DATE AND VENUE OF THE MEETING

The meeting will be held from 1st to 4th March 2016 in Rabat (Morocco).

VII. WORKING LANGUAGES

The working languages of the meeting are French, English and Arabic.

VIII. CONTACTS

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