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Press Release

North Africa can contribute to making the African continent become a pole of growth

How to optimize the role that North Africa can play to help unleash the Continent's potential as a growth pole in the world? This is the theme around which will be held the 27th session of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts (ICE) that the Office for North Africa of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA/ NAO) is convening from 6 to 9 March 2012 in Rabat, (Morocco).

The ICE is the deliberative organ of the ECA Office for North Africa which is made up of the representatives of the sub region's member countries (namely Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania, Sudan and Tunisia), who meet annually to give strategic guidance to the work of the ECA Office in North Africa and monitor its progress. This intergovernmental committee is a framework for exchange on a yearly basis on the economic and social situation prevailing in the sub region, with a view to making appropriate recommendations on development strategies that would improve the economic and social performance of the member countries, and strengthen ways and means to achieve a more effective regional integration in North Africa.

For the second consecutive year, the ICE is held in an environment charged with unprecedented challenges for the region, due mainly to the institutional and political transitions that it is experiencing currently. Added to this, we need to underline a number of exogenous factors such as the persistent impact of the global crises that marked the world since 2009, as well as the relative decline in growth in Europe resulting from the sovereign debt crisis that a number of EU countries are still experiencing.

Indeed, no one can ignore today the gravity of the context and the impact that all these factors are bearing on our countries, especially on exports to the European market, direct foreign investments, tourism and employment. The ICE meeting will provide experts with an opportunity to specify the scope of this problem and gauge its acuity and actual impact on development in the countries of the sub region. It will also enable them to work together on practical solutions to be considered in an integrated and regionally oriented matter, so as to ensure the relevance of these solutions over time.

Asked about the reasons for choosing this particular topic, Ms. Karima Bounemra, Director of the ECA Office for North Africa said that "this theme is in conformity with the general topic agreed for this year's ECA Conference of Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (22-27 Mars 2012). It is also based on the empirical evidence that, thanks to the potentials it is endowed with, Africa is destined today to become one of the regions that can boast good growth, considering its economic performance, its quick recovery from the global economic crisis of 2008-2009, the importance of its natural and human resources, as well as its potential to attract regional and international investments. As the other sub-regions, North Africa has a role to play to maximize its contribution to this process in which the Continent is involved so as to become a new pole of growth in the world".

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During its four-day work, the ICE shall review reports prepared by the Office on a number of topics including: (i) changes in macroeconomic and social indicators in 2010-2011 and prospects for the regional integration in North Africa, (ii) the implementation of the multiyear cooperation programme with AMU; (iii) progress achieved in the MDGs implementation and other regional and international agendas including special initiatives in North Africa; and (iv) Rio + 20 progress and challenges for North Africa. The outcomes of the upcoming ICE and its recommendations will be reflected in an official report that will be submitted to ECA Conference of Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development for consideration and adoption.

The ICE meeting will be attended by representatives of ministries, departments and national institutions in charge of planning and socioeconomic development, regional integration, social development, agriculture and environment; as well as the Secretariat General of the AMU and the General Secretariat of CEN-SAD, in addition to representatives of the private sector and civil society organisations. Participation to the ICE is also open to universities and research centers, UN agencies and other development partners operating in the sub-region.

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