



22nd Meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts of the Sub-regional Office for Eastern Africa

“Implementing the African Continental Free Trade Area in Eastern Africa: From Vision to Action”

Concept Note

Venue: Kigali, Rwanda

Dates: 20-22 November 2018

I. Background

The Sub-Regional Office for Eastern Africa (SRO-EA) of the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) is proposing to hold the 22nd Session of its Intergovernmental Committee of Experts (ICE) in Kigali, Rwanda. The ICE is a body set up by the General Assembly of the United Nations and is the statutory organ of the ECA Office for Eastern Africa. It includes representatives of the fourteen member States¹ served by the office, as well as Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs) of the sub-region, development partners, research centres and other stakeholders. The composition of the current ICE bureau includes Comoros (Chair), Rwanda (First Vice Chair), DR Congo (Second Vice Chair), and South Sudan (Secretary).

The ICE meets annually on a rotational basis in the different countries covered by the office. The objectives are three-fold:

- i) To define and review the implementation of the work programme of the SRO-EA;
- ii) To discuss key issues and challenges pertaining to the economic and social development of the region, with the view to making appropriate recommendations;
- iii) As a forum to strengthen partnerships and cooperation between stakeholders to sustain regional integration and accelerate the pace of economic development.

The last five ICEs were held in Comoros (2017, on “*Accelerating Structural Transformation in Eastern Africa: Catalysts and Constraints*”), Kenya (2016, on “*Institutions, Decentralizations and Structural Transformation in Eastern Africa*”), Madagascar (2015, on “*Harnessing the Blue Economy for the Development of Eastern Africa*”), DR Congo (2014, on “*National Champions, Foreign Direct Investment and Structural Transformation in Eastern Africa*”) and Uganda (2013, on “*Energy Access and Security in Eastern Africa*”). The last time the ICE was held in Kigali was in 2010.

II. Rationale for the theme of the 22nd ICE

The historic signing of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) agreement in Kigali in March 2018 provides hope that we can consolidate the creation of a truly integrated market across the region and strengthen regional value chains. To fully utilize the opportunities of the AfCFTA, the ICE will focus on the

¹ Burundi, Comoros, D.R. Congo, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Madagascar, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, South Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda.

discussion of national and regional AfCFTA strategies complementary to the broader trade policy. Among the themes to be discussed will be:

- An Overview of the Region – Macroeconomic and Social Conditions in Eastern Africa.
- Implementing the AfCFTA – First things First?
- Trade Facilitation and Manufacturing – How to leverage New Opportunities in Intra-African Trade
- Gender Perspectives on the AfCFTA
- Services Trade and the AfCFTA
- Beyond Trade: Implementing the Protocol on the Free Movement of People

III Format of 22nd ICE Meeting

The 22nd ICE meeting will be held in plenary and parallel sessions organized on the topics mentioned above. The ECA working languages are French and English, with simultaneous interpretation.

IV. Participants

The ICE is attended by high-level representatives of Eastern Africa member States, RECs and IGOs. In attendance will also be representatives of the private sector, international institutions, civil society organisations, media, and other relevant stakeholders. The 21st ICE was held in Moroni, Comoros and was attended by over three hundred participants from the sub-region. The President of the Union of Comoros H.E. Assoumani Azali attended the 21st ICE, along with the country's Vice-Presidents, Cabinet Ministers and other top officials. The Secretary General of the Indian Ocean Commission was also in attendance.

V. Dates and Venue

The ICE meeting is scheduled to be held on 20-21-22 November 2018 in Kigali, Rwanda.

VI. Contacts

For any further information, you may contact:

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