

**Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials
and Experts for North Africa**

Thirty-fifth meeting

17 November 2020

Theme: “Recovering from COVID-19: Policies and Strategies for North Africa”

Aide-memoire

I. Context

1. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) Sub Regional Office for North Africa is one of five Sub Regional Offices of the Commission. Based in Rabat, Morocco, it covers seven countries: Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Sudan and Tunisia. The main objective of the Sub Regional Office is to strengthen the capacity of member States in the sub region to design and implement, based on credible data, suitable national policies and programmes for inclusive development and structural socio economic transformation in North Africa. Within the framework of the strategic orientation of ECA, the Sub Regional Office has adopted an area of specialization focused on employment and skills for sustainable development.

2. As a statutory deliberative body, the Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts for North Africa is responsible for the strategic direction of the activities of the Sub Regional Office. The Committee holds a meeting annually to consider the activity report and the results achieved by the Sub Regional Office, its work programme and strategic orientations, in cohesion with the development priorities of the North African countries. The meeting also provides a forum for assessment and exchanges among high-level experts of national Governments, researchers and representatives of the private sector and civil society on evolving patterns in economic and social conditions across the sub region, with a view to making recommendations on ways to accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Agenda 2063 of the African Union, as well as deepening regional integration.

3. Scheduled to take place on 17 November 2020, the thirty-fifth meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts for North Africa takes place in a global context characterized by slower economic growth due to the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The UN forecasts expect the world economy to shrink by -3.2% in 2020 and only a timid recovery is expected for the upcoming year. Beyond its impact on human health (materialized by morbidity and mortality), COVID-19 is severely hitting the global economy through a direct reduction of economic activity due to lockdowns and restriction of movements, and indirectly through disruption of global value chains (which account for nearly half of global trade) in a highly interconnected world economy.

4. The UN forecasts that North Africa sub region’s growth will drop to -1.8% in 2020. In worst case scenario, North African economies will contract by 5.4% in 2020, while the best-case scenario indicates that North Africa will barely grow by 0.3%. The consequence will be significant increase in underemployment and unemployment. According to ILO (2020), partial lockdown measures have affected almost 2.7 billion workers, representing around 81% of the world’s workforce. ILO’s initial estimates indicate that full-time equivalent

employment loss in North Africa could reach 5 million in 2020. From the social side, the loss of jobs and revenues is expected to affect more strongly the most vulnerable people, those in the informal sector, and workers with low skills and low wages, the youth and women, widening the inequality gap within North Africa sub- region. Informal sector dependent workers have seen their source of revenue cut because of the lockdown measures, leaving millions of families without resources and depending on public financial support.

II. Objectives of the meeting

5. The overarching theme of the thirty-fifth meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts for North Africa is “*Recovering from COVID-19: Policies and Strategies for North Africa*”, in connection with the area of specialization of the Sub Regional Office “employment and skills for sustainable development”.

6. In preparation for the Thirty-Fifth meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts for North Africa, the sub-regional office organised series of webinars to consult with all stakeholders on assessing the current economic and social situation in North Africa and identified number of different policies that can reduce the recovery period, boost growth, save jobs and create new employment. The webinars build on the results of research work and analysis undertaken by the ECA, other partner institutions, think tanks and academia working on North Africa’s development.

7. The webinars discussed the vulnerabilities of the North African economies to pandemic risks and highlighted the structural weaknesses of the economies. They created a space for experience sharing on diverse national trade strategies adopted by North Africa member states and AfCFTA role to mitigate the negative consequences of COVID-19. Webinars discussed how new technologies can help North African countries to reduce the negative effects of the COVID19 pandemic on government services and national economies and use new technologies to accelerate recovery and adaptation to the new economic context.

8. The webinars aimed at promoting best practices on job creation in North Africa by showing case studies from Africa that provide best practices for promoting youth employment and women. Discussion also included the identification of lessons learned and replication from past successes.

9. The results of these discussions constituted the basis for the recommendations shared with the governments of North African countries to help them to set their own policies to shorten the post COVID-19 recovery period.

10. The Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts for North Africa will provide a forum whereby representatives of member States can consider several statutory reports, such as the sub regional profile, which comprises a comparative analysis of economic and social conditions across the sub region; the status of the implementation of the major regional and international development programmes; the activity report and the 2021 work programme and strategic orientations of the Sub Regional Office.

III. Expected results

11. The meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts for North Africa is expected to refine and adopt the reports to be presented by the ECA Sub Regional Office for North Africa, draw up recommendations on policies and strategies for decision-makers towards the formulation of national development programmes to shorten the recovery period, boost growth, save jobs and enhance decent jobs creation. There will be a detailed report on the meeting, summarizing the presentations, discussions and refinements to be made to the presentations, key conclusions and recommendations.

12. The report of the thirty-fifth meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts for North Africa will be submitted to the Conference of Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, a deliberative organ of ECA.

IV. Organization and operational details of the meeting

13. The thirty-fifth meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts for North Africa will be held in a plenary, during which reports drawn up by the Sub Regional Office and papers prepared by eminent experts will be presented and discussed. The draft version of the final report will be sent to member States within two months of the closure of the meeting.

V. Participation

14. Participation in the meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts for North Africa includes official representation from the governments North African countries who have the right to make interventions.

15. The meeting is also open to observers participation particularly from high-level representatives of national ministries, administrations and institutions responsible for planning and economic and social development, finance, employment, trade and industry, agriculture, environment and social development; representatives of the general secretariat of the Arab Maghreb Union and other regional intergovernmental organizations based in North Africa; representatives of civil society and the private sector; universities and research institutions; United Nations agencies; and other development partners engaged in the sub region.

VI. Date of the meeting

16. The meeting will take place on 17 November 2020.

VII. Working languages

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

VIII. Contacts

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