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**The 26<sup>th</sup> Session of the Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts  
(ICSOE) for Southern Africa**

**Virtual  
28 -29 October 2020**

**Outcome Statement**

## Preamble

1. The 26<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts (ICSOE) of Southern Africa was organized virtually and Chaired by the Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho on 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> October 2020 under the theme: “*Policies and strategies towards effective private sector led growth and job creation in Southern Africa.*”

2. The Minister of Finance of the Kingdom of Lesotho, Honourable Thabo Sophonea, delivered the key note address to open the meeting following welcoming remarks by Mr. Sizo Mhlanga, the act. Director of the Economic Commission for Africa’s Sub Regional Office for Southern Africa (SRO-SA), Mr. Salvator Niyonzima, the United Nations Resident Coordinator in the Kingdom of Lesotho, Ms. Myranda Lutempo, Senior Policy Officer, representing the African Union Representative, Southern Africa Regional Office (AU-SARO), Ms. Providence Mavubi, Director, Industry and Agriculture, representing the Secretary General of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and Mr. Sibonginkhosi Christopher Mavuso, Promotional Officer, Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Trade (Eswatini), representing Eswatini, Chairperson of the Bureau of the 25<sup>th</sup> ICSOE Session.

3. The Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Zimbabwe), Honourable Prof. Mthuli Ncube, delivered a presentation entitled: “*Impact of COVID-19 on National Socio-economic Development Patterns and Implementing Strategies for Building Back Better and Faster: Experiences from Zimbabwe.*”

4. Delegates from the following Southern African member States representing Ministries of Agriculture, Commerce, Economic Development, Finance, Foreign Affairs, Industry and Trade, participated in the 26<sup>th</sup> ICSOE: Angola, Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

5. Participants at the 26<sup>th</sup> ICSOE included representatives of academic and research institutions, the private sector and private sector umbrella organizations, regional economic communities, women traders’ organizations, freight organizations, print and digital media houses, civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations and regional and international development partners including the United Nations bodies and the African Development Bank. Experts and independent consultants on the private sector development, industrialization, small and medium scale enterprises, regional integration, and trade in goods and services also participated in the virtual meeting. Annex 1 is the list of delegates and participants and their affiliation.

## Programme of Work

6. The delegates elected Lesotho as Chairperson of the Bureau of the 26<sup>th</sup> ICSOE, Malawi as Vice Chairperson and South Africa as Rapporteur.

7. The 26<sup>th</sup> ICSOE Session adopted the Agenda below:

- i. Opening Session
- ii. Election of the Bureau and Adoption of the Agenda and Programme of Work
- iii. Presentation by Special Guest to the 26<sup>th</sup> ICSOE on: *Impact of COVID-19 on national socio-economic development patterns and implementing strategies for building back better: Experiences from Zimbabwe* – Honourable Prof. Mthuli Ncube, Minister of Finance and Economic Development
- iv. Presentation of Statutory Reports by ECA:
  - a. Economic and Social Conditions in Southern Africa
  - b. Programme Performance of ECA in Southern Africa
  - c. The Implementation of regional and international agendas and other special initiatives in Southern Africa: Progress and Status of the Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) in Southern Africa
- v. Presentation of Thematic Report: *Policies and strategies towards effective private sector-led growth and job creation in Southern Africa.*
- vi. Panel discussion on: *Addressing the constraints to private sector growth in Southern Africa for economic growth and job creation*
- vii. Panel discussion on: *Supporting COVID-19 responses in Southern Africa for building back better and faster: The Experience of development partners*
- viii. Presentation of the Recommendations and Outcomes of the Ad Hoc Experts Group Meeting on: *“The AfCFTA and trade in services: opportunities and strategies for Southern Africa.”*
- ix. Presentation of on: *Supporting Southern African Countries to simultaneously adopt and integrate both the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063 through the Integrated Planning and Reporting Toolkit (IPRT).*
- x. Panel Discussion on: *“Boosting the capacity of the private sector to exploit the opportunities from the AfCFTA”*
- xi. Any Other Business
- xii. Date and venue of the 27<sup>th</sup> ICSOE
- xiii. Consideration and Adoption of the Outcome Statement of the 26<sup>th</sup> ICSOE
- xiv. Closing Session

### **Account of Proceedings**

8. The Committee considered three statutory reports submitted by the Secretariat on (i) Economic and Social Conditions in Southern Africa in 2019 and 2020 and Prospects for 2021; (ii) Programme Performance of ECA Southern Africa Office; and (iii) Progress in the implementation of regional and international agendas and other special initiatives in the sub region focusing on Progress and Status of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). The findings of the thematic study on: *‘Policies and strategies towards effective private sector-led growth and job creation in Southern Africa’* was presented and discussed by the Committee. Furthermore, the Committee also reviewed and approved the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Expert Group Meeting (AEGM) on: *“The AfCFTA and trade in services: opportunities and strategies for Southern Africa.”* The AEGM was organized a week before the 26<sup>th</sup> ICSOE.

9. The Committee endorsed the Report of the Programme Performance of ECA Southern Africa Office for 2020 and the work programme for 2021.

## Observations

10. The 26<sup>th</sup> ICSOE Session made several observations based on the presentations by the Secretariat and from the ensuing discussions and panel discussions.

### **On economic and social conditions in the region in the face of the pandemic, options and strategies for building back faster and better and bouncing beyond, the Committee:**

- i. observed that the COVID-19 pandemic has devastated the already struggling economies in Southern Africa and debilitated social and economic parameters;
- ii. broached the adverse impact of the pandemic on sectoral progress, industrialization, tourism, trade and investment;
- iii. conveyed dismay at the slow pace of reforms in agriculture, ICT, mining, energy and transportation sectors to ensure food security, enhance productivity and promote economic growth, diversification, national and regional value chains;
- iv. noted with concern the deepening fiscal and debt crises among member States and how the emerging debt spiral is diverting resources from socioeconomic imperatives including programmes towards SDGs and thus leading to reversal of the gains already attained;
- v. expressed alarm at the deteriorating macroeconomic fundamentals, driven partly by structurally slow growth, low business confidence, waning investments flows, the poor policy environment and the COVID-19 pandemic, which severed the regional and international supply chains;
- vi. praised the regional, continental and global solidarity demonstrated in dealing with the pandemic and its impacts;
- vii. echoed and supported member States' resolve to work together to address future health and environmental catastrophes and other global socio-economic shocks;
- viii. observed that there is limited preparedness to pandemics among member States and the constrained fiscal space (lack of resource buffers) to respond to the pandemic;
- ix. bemoaned the unacceptable sharp rise in incidences of GBV and child abuse amplified by the COVID-19 induced lockdowns;
  - x. voiced collective displeasure at the allegations of misappropriation of funds meant to address the COVID-19 impact on health and livelihoods and called on member States to institute mechanisms to recover looted resources and redirect them to appropriate uses while prosecuting the guilty;
- xi. emphasized the importance of anchoring recovery and building back better and bouncing beyond post-COVID-19 on a well-capacitated and capitalised private sector, including micro, small and medium enterprises;
- xii. underscored the need to integrate climate change issues into the overall national and regional socio-economic development plans to anchor preparedness for challenges emerging from droughts, floods and other weather-induced calamities;
- xiii. observed that there is general paucity of data on several indicators to facilitate informed planning and decision making at both national and regional level; and

- xiv. noted with satisfaction the proactive steps that member States have taken and continue to take to arrest the spread of the pandemic and the resources deployed to mitigate its adverse impact on lives and livelihoods.

**On policies and strategies for private sector-led growth and job creation, the Committee:**

- xv. underscored the importance of a well-capacitated private sector in leading economic recovery and growth through the creation of sustainable and decent jobs;
- xvi. observed that there are serious technical, financial, energy, transport, market, technical standards and other operational challenges facing the private sector and how these undermine production and overall competitiveness;
- xvii. highlighted the various national and regional business opportunities which the private sector could exploit profitably but bemoaned the inability of the regional private sector, including MSMEs to take the lead in exploiting these opportunities;
- xviii. observed the rising levels of informality in member States and the challenges of indecent work often associated with the informal sector and therefore the need to improve the operation of this sector;
- xix. underscored the importance of regional industrial frameworks in anchoring the creation of a conducive environment for the private sector to flourish but lamented the slow pace of domestication due to the lack of political will;
- xx. highlighted the immense opportunities in agriculture and mining value chains and in the growing services sector especially in light of the AfCFTA; and
- xxi. underscored the importance of skills upgrade in anchoring value addition and the development of value chains and further emphasised the importance of a regional approach to skills development.

**On progress on the African Continental Free Trade Area in Southern Africa and on strategies for trade in services, the Committee:**

- xxii. underscored the importance of member States to urgently ratify the AfCFTA agreement, deposit instruments of ratification and to develop appropriate national strategies in order to enjoy the benefits as State Parties once trading under the Agreement commences in January 2021;
- xxiii. identified the need to invest in critical infrastructure to accelerate both foreign and domestic investment flows as key for private sector growth;
- xxiv. highlighted the need to facilitate the establishment of a platform for sharing experiences in the implementation of the AfCFTA in the region so that member States can learn from each other;
- xxv. emphasized the capacity challenges faced by the private sector, including MSMEs, in exploiting the immense opportunities from liberalised trade under the AfCFTA;
- xxvi. stressed the need to promote the competitiveness, efficiency and value-added of services sectors at a national level and then expanding this to regional level;
- xxvii. accentuated the need to harmonize policies, legal and regulatory frameworks in the services sector at a regional level to facilitate cross border investments in the services sector;

- xxviii. bemoaned the lack of data for informed measurement of the contribution of services and trade in services in both national and regional economies;
- xxix. lamented the lack of harmonized policies across regional member States to harness digital technologies to improve competitiveness in the services sector and unleash trade in hitherto non-tradable service sectors such as education and health through remote means;
- xxx. noted the limited technical expertise in the services sector in the region as a major drawback to accelerated growth of the sector;
- xxxi. observed that the disruptions in trade due to lockdowns, closure of borders and the suspension of transportation emphasized the need for member States to diversify economies and strengthen sectors that have relied mostly on imports from outside the region such as the health sector; and
- xxxii. underscored that COVID-19 provided an opportunity for member States to invest in digital technologies for both production and services and in reforming the public services to embrace and increase the utilisation of digital technology.

## **Recommendations**

11. The Committee proffered recommendations towards (i) strengthening and/or stabilizing the national and regional macroeconomic environment, (ii) creating a platform for the implementation of the AfCFTA in Southern Africa (iii) enhancing the role of the private sector, including MSMEs and (iv) building back better and faster and bouncing back beyond post-COVID-19.

### **On strengthening and/or stabilizing the national and regional macroeconomic environment, member States should:**

- i. work assiduously to reduce public debt, spend judiciously on priority areas, and monitor emerging or potential inflationary pressures of such spending decisions;
- ii. restructure existing resource envelopes away from previously planned capital spending, where possible, before considering borrowing;
- iii. entrench investor-friendly environment through policy certainty (especially sectoral policies where investments go); macroeconomic stability; and good governance including zero tolerance to actual or potential instances of corruption;
- iv. implement sectoral reforms to boost national and regional productive capacities, ensure food security, create jobs and support faster economic growth;
- v. actively foster social inclusion, including through: promoting better education and health outcomes; employment creation especially for youth and women by supporting relevant sectors that are labour-intensive and encourage entrepreneurship; and ensure zero tolerance to GBV and child abuse;
- vi. introduce potent and responsive gender and youth inclusive strategies as anchors for industrialization for growth and job creation in the region;
- vii. address factors responsible for the reduction of agricultural and manufacturing sectors' contribution to members States' economies;
- viii. facilitate the development of value chains within the region to stimulate local demand and insulate economies from challenges emanating from the international economy; and

- ix. adopt strong political commitment, guided by a regulatory framework where all SADC member States engaged collaboratively to actualise the regional development agenda work beyond signing and ratification of protocols and agreements.

**On creating a platform for the implementation of the AfCFTA agreement in Southern Africa and regional industrialization, member States should:**

- i. expeditiously ratify the AfCFTA agreement and develop implementation strategies in a fully consultative manner to ensure that all pertinent issues and challenges in opening up to external markets are factored into the national AfCFTA strategies; and
- ii. harmonize policy, legal and regulatory frameworks in the services sector to facilitate the movement of services entrepreneurs across the region to exploit opportunities.

**On creating a platform for the implementation of the AfCFTA agreement in Southern Africa AfCFTA and on accelerating regional industrialization, RECs should:**

- i. develop regional AfCFTA Strategies to guide the national strategies and facilitate the evolution of a harmonized approach to the AfCFTA across the region;
- ii. support member States to harmonize policies, legal and regulatory frameworks in the services sector to facilitate cross-border movement of services; and
- iii. create a platform where member States can show-case their services sectors to stimulate collaboration and enhance competitiveness through improved product and services quality.

**On supporting growth and sustainability of the private sector, member States should:**

- i. introduce mechanisms for collaboration between small and large enterprises including mandatory requirements for business linkages between these enterprises to provide learning opportunities as well as enable the smaller enterprises to participate in large contracts;
- ii. invest in both soft and hard infrastructure to provide a conducive environment for the growth and sustainability of the private sector including ensuring the creation of an appropriate and supportive environment for MSMEs;
- iii. adopt an ecosystem development approach encompassing information and incentives support, and investments and implementation support to the MSMEs in strategic economic sectors for inclusive, innovative, sustainable and resilient development outcomes; and
- iv. invest in programmes to develop and sustain the entrepreneurial and business skills of the micro, small and medium enterprises including through frameworks such as innovation hubs, special economic zones and industrial parks.

**On building back better and faster and bouncing back beyond post-COVID-19, member States should:**

- i. introduce well-targeted interventions to deal decisively with COVID-19's health and socio-economic impacts to save lives and livelihoods, while eliminating wastage and extirpating corruption;
- ii. strengthen the financial management system to ensure that the financial and material resources mobilised are prudently used and leakages eliminated;
- iii. create a sustainable framework for the collaboration of industry and academic institutions to support productive research towards developing solutions to the challenges from COVID-19;
- iv. proactively seek debt restructuring with creditors and agree on terms that would not undermine countries' ability to deal with COVID-19's impact and other urgent social requirements;
- v. develop partnerships at regional level to manufacture requirements for the health sector, including those needed to deal with COVID-19 and other such pandemics;
- vi. introduce policies and strategies to address and forestall similar pandemic occurrences in future to minimise the adverse impacts associated with economic lockdowns and other restrictions on business operations;
- vii. target specific high growth economic sectors where the private sector is very active in building back faster and better to facilitate bouncing back speedily; and
- viii. develop mechanisms and strategies to unlock domestic financing towards building back better initiatives including involving the local private sector as well as integrating this into economic and fiscal policy frameworks.

**On supporting building back better and faster, and bouncing back beyond post-COVID-19, development partners should:**

- i. support the efforts of member States in building back better (including in social programmes) and bouncing back beyond the pandemic episode especially using concessionary funding to avoid escalating the levels of indebtedness;
- ii. continuously share experiences in the various member States in supporting socio-economic recovery efforts including direct support to enterprises and the informal sector; and
- iii. mobilise debtor nations for debt forgiveness and also support the development, growth and resuscitation of high impact industries as anchors for post-COVID-19 recovery.

**On supporting building back better and faster and bouncing back beyond post-COVID-19, RECs should:**

- i. support programmes and strategies towards a regional approach to address the impact of future pandemics, including through policy harmonization and the adoption of a coordinated approach to production and procurement of the required medicines and equipment; and



- ii. implement and accelerate initiatives towards a regional approach to value chains development under which the specific nodes for MSMEs participation can be identified and supported through local content policies and thus allow these enterprises to benefit from the AfCFTA to promote the evolution of more regional lead companies.

12. The Committee endorsed the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Experts Group meeting on *The AfCFTA and trade in services: opportunities and strategies for Southern Africa* (Annex 2).

### **Way Forward**

13. The Committee underscored:

- i. the need to expedite implementation of the AEGM recommendations towards addressing the challenges in the services sector in the region to enable member States to optimize benefits from the AfCFTA in both the goods and services;
- ii. that SRO-SA should continue to urge regional member States to ratify the AfCFTA Agreement and also provide technical support for the development of national strategies in preparation for trading as State Parties, once trade commences under the agreement;
- iii. that SRO-SA should work closely with member States, RECs, IGOs and other stakeholders to support member States build back better and faster and bounce back beyond after COVID-19;
- iv. that the recommendations of the studies on the private sector and the services sector be submitted to the appropriate stakeholders, SADC and COMESA Secretariats for implementation; and
- v. the urgent need for the Secretariat to follow-up on the offer to host the 27<sup>th</sup> ICSOE of Southern Africa by Malawi so that the requisite preparations can commence early.

### **Vote of Thanks**

14. The Delegates and Participants of the 26<sup>th</sup> Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts of Southern Africa expressed appreciation to the leadership of the Kingdom of Lesotho in steering the deliberations and the crafting of recommendations and to the Secretariat for diligently organizing the successful virtual meeting of the Committee.

**Done on the 29<sup>th</sup> of October 2020**

## Annex 1

### List of Delegates and Participants

| Name                             | Position                         | Ministry/Organization                         | Email Address                                                                    |
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## **Annex 2**

### **Outcome Statement of the Ad-hoc Expert Group Meeting on “The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and Trade in Services: Opportunities and Strategies for Southern Africa”**

#### **Preamble**

1. The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa Sub-Regional Office for Southern Africa (SRO-SA) organised the Ad-hoc Expert Group Meeting (AEGM) on “The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and Trade in Services: Opportunities and Strategies for Southern Africa” virtually on Tuesday October 20, 2020.
2. The purpose of the AEGM was to discuss the status of trade in services negotiations under the AfCFTA and the challenges and opportunities for developing tradable services sectors in the Southern African region through a review of the findings and recommendations of a study on “The African Continental Free Trade Area and Trade in Services: Opportunities and Strategies for Southern Africa” commissioned by SRO-SA.
3. The act. Director of SRO-SA, Mr. Sizo Mhlanga and Mr. Mluleki S. Dlamini, Director, Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry, Chair of the 25<sup>th</sup> Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts of Southern Africa Bureau (Kingdom of Eswatini), who also Chaired the AEGM, delivered the welcoming remarks and opening statements respectively.

#### **Attendance**

4. The meeting was attended by over 30 trade, trade in services and regional integration experts and Chief AfCFTA negotiators from the following public and private institutions: the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Secretariat, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) Secretariat, East African Community (EAC) Secretariat, Economic Development Board of Mauritius, TRALAC trade law center, Directorate of Trade at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade of Mauritius, Directorate of Trade at the Ministry of Industry and Commerce of Mozambique, Department of Trade and Industry at the African Union Commission, Directorate of Trade at the Ministry of Trade and Industry of Lesotho, Directorate of Trade at the Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry of Zambia, International Trade Center, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, International Organization for Migration, Laval University/FERDI, University of Zambia, University of Ibadan, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, University of the Witwatersrand, International Economics Consulting Limited, the ECA Sub-Regional office for Eastern Africa, ECA Regional Integration and Trade Division, ECA Africa Trade Policy Center and SRO-SA.
5. The Agenda was as follows: -

- i. Opening Session.
- ii. Session 1: Overview of the services and tradable services sectors in Southern Africa: characteristics, strengths, weaknesses, case stories and lessons learnt.
- iii. Session 2: Trade in services under the African Continental Free Trade Area: the state of play in Southern Africa.
- iv. Session 3: The African Continental Free Trade Area and Trade in Services: Opportunities and Strategies for Southern Africa and experiences from other regions.
- v. Closing Session.

### **Account of Proceedings**

6. The experts reviewed the findings and recommendations of the study focusing on how Southern Africa could address challenges in the services sector and leverage attendant opportunities to develop competitive, efficient, formal and high value-added services sectors that can boost trade in services in the region and support the industrialization process, promote decent job creation and the achievement of the SDGs. The review was complemented by presentations and interventions by discussants and other invited experts.

### **Recommendations**

7. To strengthen the context, content, structure, flow and recommendations of the study the experts recommended the following: -
- a. Inclusion of an analysis on the impact of COVID-19 on trade in services in Southern Africa and fleshing out its implications on regional and domestic trade in services, especially transport, tourism, and Information and Communications Technologies (ICT);
  - b. Analysis of Mode 3 in services trade, mainly Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), and the related impacts and implications;
  - c. Introduction of reference to Africa-specific studies on services trade (situation of the services sector on the continent);
  - d. Provision of more anecdotal and case examples of trade in services in the region with an analysis of successes, failures and lessons learnt;
  - e. Addressing issues of informality in the services sector and its implications on policies and strategies for the development of tradable services in the region;
  - f. A deeper and more extensive analysis of the weaknesses and strengths of the services sector in the region;
  - g. An elaboration of the regulatory barriers to trade in services and the regulatory reforms needed across the region to anchor regionalization of the sector;
  - h. Addressing the issue of multiple ongoing parallel negotiations and its implications for the development of trade in services in Southern Africa;
  - i. Strengthening the discussion on digitalization – its potential for unlocking new sectors (e.g. financial technology) and digital trade in services;
  - j. Addressing the impact and need for the mutual recognition of qualifications across member States;
  - k. Expanding on opportunities available to Southern Africa (which sectors/subsectors/entry points in services value-chains and sectors that offer scope for cross-border trade);

- l. Strengthening narrative on “servicification” of manufacturing and services value chains and the attendant implications;
  - m. Strengthening policy recommendations based on discussions and presentations at the meeting; and
  - n. Providing suggestions on how to better align trade in services provisions across AfCFTA, SADC and COMESA in a harmonized and coherent manner.
8. The experts recommended actions by member States, regional economic communities (RECs) and other stakeholders to address the challenges and capture the opportunities of the services sectors.

**(i) Member States should:**

- a. develop and implement strategies to facilitate the liberalization of services sectors;
- b. strengthen capacities at national level at measuring the contribution of services and trade in services in national and regional statistics;
- c. promote access of services companies to trade finance, as opposed to only goods companies;
- d. facilitate public procurement contracts for firms in services sectors, akin to goods sectors;
- e. attract FDI in services sectors, not just goods sectors, also as part of promoting availability of foreign finance;
- f. prioritize development in infrastructure services given critical role of infrastructure in anchoring competitiveness in trade in both goods and services;
- g. harness digital technologies to improve competitiveness in the services sector and unleash trade in hitherto non-tradable services sectors (e.g. education, health through remote means);
- h. promote digital skills development and facilitate a digital entrepreneurship support system as part of leveraging digitalization to support services development;
- i. protect trademarks, copyrights, patents and develop an Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) system nationally and continentally;
- j. create an elaborate ecosystem for e-commerce/digital trade including policies, regulations, legislation and protocols for data transfer and protection;
- k. promote diversification within services subsectors through well targeted strategies;
- l. develop a comprehensive broadband strategy, matched by a review of the legal and regulatory ICT environment, and a strengthening of the cyber security framework;
- m. address regulatory barriers to trade in services that tend to be higher than barriers to trade in goods;
- n. reduce regulatory complexity by updating regulations to eliminate disruptive modes of doing business;
- o. promote inter-central bank cooperation to establish and improve payments clearance mechanisms, for example through pan-African initiatives such as the Pan African Payments and Settlements Platform;
- p. liberalise intra-African financial flows for payments for digital trade;
- q. accord small players and start-ups a voice in industry and development entities; and
- r. ratify the agreement establishing the AfCFTA to ensure that countries enjoy the benefits of State Parties.

- (ii) **RECs should:**
- a. promote the harmonization of policy and regulatory frameworks in the services sector to eliminate country-level differences this will facilitate regionalization of the services sector;
  - b. harmonize the negotiations and agreements where regional member States belong to several RECs, for example there are negotiations at four levels for some member States – SADC, COMESA, Tripartite and AfCFTA and sometimes the offers and agreements differ or even contradict;
  - c. improve the regulatory environment in the services sector to ensure that proper and clear regulations exist to facilitate negotiations;
  - d. facilitate free movement of persons and skilled professionals in the sub-region;
  - e. promote regional clustering of services firms to facilitate evolution of economies of scale;
  - f. develop hubs as providers of regional services for the whole sub-region and continent;
  - g. promote development of Africa-centric intellectual property hubs;
  - h. develop and utilize a settlement platforms for transactions;
  - i. develop region-wide databases on the services sector to facilitate proper policy making and strategy development;
  - j. create a platform where member States can share best practices in the services sector as well as competitively sell their services; and
  - k. adopt cooperative approaches through greater dialogue and sharing of information between the trade and (labour) migration communities, private sector and along corridors between countries of origin and destination.

### **Way Forward**

The experts recommended that the report be revised based on these recommendations and be shared within the next three weeks for a two-week final review period. SRO-SA will finalize the report once cleared by experts after the post-meeting review.

**Done virtually  
20 October 2020**