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**Economic Commission for Africa  
Subregional Office for North Africa**

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

Thirty-sixth session (online)

24 November 2021

**Report of the thirty-sixth session of the  
Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts for  
North Africa**



A.22-00279



## **I. Opening of the session [agenda item 1]**

### **A. Organization and attendance**

1. Kamel Meraghni, Head of Forecasting and Policy at the Ministry of Finance of Algeria and outgoing Chair of the Bureau of the Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts (ICSOE), and Taieb Baccouche, Secretary-General of the Arab Maghreb Union, attended the opening ceremony of the thirty-sixth session of the Intergovernmental Committee. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) was represented by Zuzana Schwidrowski, Director of the ECA Subregional Office for North Africa.
2. The representatives of seven member States (Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Sudan and Tunisia) of the Intergovernmental Committee were present at the opening of the session, thus reaching the required quorum. Representatives of the Arab Maghreb Union, international and regional organizations, academia and cooperation agencies, financial institutions, and United Nations system organizations also attended the opening ceremony.

### **B. Opening statements**

3. Mr. Meraghni conveyed his country's appreciation for having been designated to chair the thirty-fifth session of the Intergovernmental Committee, which focused on the major topic of economic stimulus measures in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic. The outgoing Chair stressed the pandemic's unprecedented impact on the economic and social conditions in the subregion and the world, and the importance and the effectiveness of the measures taken by member countries to mitigate the effect on the population. He also expressed his appreciation to the Subregional Office for North Africa for its ongoing efforts to support member States in the challenging context of restrictions imposed owing to the pandemic.
4. On behalf of Vera Songwe, Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa and United Nations Under-Secretary-General, Ms. Schwidrowski welcomed the participants to the opening of the thirty-sixth session of the Intergovernmental Committee. She pointed out the relevance of regional integration in tackling the current disruptions in global trade, notably in addressing the challenge of creating the jobs that would be needed to absorb the influx of millions of young people into the labour market every year. She also noted the role that the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area could play in promoting industrialization and structural transformation in North African economies. She concluded by wishing the Committee every success in its work.
5. In his introductory remarks, Mr. Baccouche thanked ECA for convening and hosting this timely intergovernmental meeting to address a crucial issue for the countries of the subregion, and for providing an opportunity to build on the experiences and public policies that had been implemented. He underlined the dynamic role of the private sector in trade and economic integration in North Africa, and in particular in the strategic sectors to be examined by the session participants, such as the pharmaceutical sector and the digital finance sector. He finally wished the Committee much success in its work.

## **II. Election of officers** [agenda item 2]

6. After consultation among the heads of the delegations, the Committee elected unanimously the new Bureau, which was constituted as follows:

Chair	:	Libya
Vice-chair	:	Mauritania
Rapporteur	:	Morocco

## **III. Adoption of the agenda and programme of work** [agenda item 3]

7. In his opening statement as the Chair of the incoming Bureau, Saad Lihniash Mohamed Abdullah, from the Ministry of Economy and Trade of Libya, welcomed all participants and thanked the member countries for the trust placed in his country. He commended the outgoing Bureau and the Subregional Office for their efforts over the past period.

8. The Committee then adopted the agenda for the thirty-sixth session (ECA/SRO-NA/ICSOE/36/1), as set out in annex II to the present report, as well as the programme of work (ECA/SRO-NA/ICSO/36/1/Add.1).

## **IV. Evolution of economic and social conditions in North Africa: regional profile review – North Africa** [agenda item 4]

9. The secretariat presented the main findings of the report entitled “North Africa 2020 Subregional Profile: Public-Private Partnerships for a Green and Inclusive Post-COVID-19 Recovery in North Africa” (ECA/SRO-NA/ICSOE/36/2). The report featured an analysis of macroeconomic developments in North Africa, as well as the role of public-private partnerships as a part of a post-COVID-19 recovery strategy.

10. The Committee pointed out the absence of data for Libya and highlighted the eradication of extreme poverty in Morocco. In that regard, the monetary poverty rate in Morocco had declined from 4.8 per cent in 2014 to 1.7 per cent in 2019, before rising to 2.5 per cent in 2020. The delegate of Tunisia stressed that political instability was not the only factor behind the macroeconomic evolution in Tunisia.

11. The secretariat clarified that each year, the Subregional Office sends a questionnaire to member countries requesting the data necessary for the preparation of the subregional profile and pointed out that no response had been received from the member countries in 2021. In this regard, the secretariat proposed to reconsider the data collection process in consultation with the member countries.

12. Following the discussion, the secretariat took note of the comments and recommendations submitted by the Committee.

## **V. Review of the implementation of regional and international development agendas and special initiatives [agenda item 5]**

13. The secretariat presented the report entitled “North African Countries and SDG 9 of the United Nations 2030 Agenda: The Way Forward” (ECA/SRO-NA/ICSOE/36/3). The report provides an overview of efforts by North African countries to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 9 (Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation), highlighting areas of progress and areas where more actions need to be taken, and set out general recommendations for countries to help them consolidate their achievements in that regard.

14. According to the report’s results based on the Goal 9 index, several North African countries performed well on Goal 9 when compared with emerging industrial economies as a whole. However, the share of manufacturing value added as a percentage of gross domestic product was declining, while the share of Agriculture remained stable. Morocco highlighted in its comments on the report that data on targets 9.1, 9.2 and 9.5 needed to be updated.

15. In addition to the commitments already made by North African countries to achieve Goal 9 in past years, ECA recommended that countries in the subregion adopt horizontal and vertical industrial policies, the aim of which is to promote competitiveness by reducing production costs for all firms, fostering an efficient and competitive market environment, and providing the infrastructure and human capital necessary to support a dynamic industrial economy. Active, vertical, and hard policies were recommended to promote linkages between local small and medium-sized enterprises and large international firms through supplier development programmes, and hence increase competitiveness by modernizing local suppliers.

16. The secretariat noted the comments and recommendations of the Committee and announced its intention to continue to work closely with the relevant national departments in the countries of the subregion to chart their progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

## **VI. Statutory matters: Report on the activities of the Subregional Office for North Africa of the Economic Commission for Africa for the period October 2020–September 2021 and the work programme for 2022 [agenda item 6]**

17. The secretariat submitted a report on the activities carried out by the Sub-Regional between October 2020 and September 2021 (ECA/SRO-NA/ICSOE/36/4), along with the work programme of the Subregional Office for 2022 (see A/76/6 (Sect. 18)). The secretariat suggested that the theme of next year’s session should center around the role of small and medium-sized enterprises in inclusive and sustainable growth.

18. Hasna Al Echcheikh El Alaoui, of the High Commission for Planning of Morocco, first congratulated Ms. Schwidrowski on her appointment as Director of the Subregional Office. She went on to express Morocco's strong interest in the effective operationalization of the Integrated Planning and Reporting Tool for the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, following recent bilateral discussions between the Subregional Office and the High Commission for Planning. She stressed the need for this tool to be adapted to the specific context of sectoral planning and the recent launch

by Morocco of the new model for development to the year 2035. She went on to remind the attendees that the High Commission for Planning had sent the secretariat its written comments and observations on the reports presented at the opening of the thirty-sixth session, notably regarding the subregional profile.

19. Abdullah Nasser Aljadi, from the Ministry of Economy and Trade of Libya, noted that, according to United Nations data, Libya was undoubtedly the country most affected by the problem of migration in the subregion. In that connection, he wished to know whether the Subregional Office had any cooperation programmes in Libya with the International Organization for Migration, with which his Government was currently working on that issue. He added that Libya would like to get the support of ECA in the field of migration along the lines of what had been provided to Morocco and other countries, having in mind the situation of Libya as a country of transit for sub-Saharan migrants.

20. He also called the attention of the secretariat to the difficulties likely to impede the implementation of the programmes in the light of the country's situation, and which had to be taken into account, in particular in terms of monitoring and evaluating activities. He also pointed out that current United Nations development programmes in Libya were making a positive impact, especially on youth employment, and that the country was currently engaged in interesting initiatives in that area, for which ECA could provide technical assistance. The Libyan delegate then requested the secretariat to state which initiatives had not been implemented by Libya during the 2021 fiscal year.

21. Replying to questions raised by the Moroccan delegate, the secretariat confirmed the resumption of work with Morocco on the project to measure distortions and productivity in industry. The secretariat added that work in this area could be effectively resumed upon receipt of data on the services sector from the High Commission for Planning. The secretariat further declared its intention to have the Subregional Office work with the High Commission in operationalizing the Integrated Planning and Reporting Tool, bearing in mind the country's sectoral planning context and the introduction of its new development model.

22. The secretariat went on to point out that, for objective reasons, Libya would be of particular interest to ECA beginning with the next fiscal year, along with the Sudan, and announced the impending resumption of field visits with a view to providing greater support to those two countries. The secretariat also pledged to investigate the possibility of extending the programme on migration to Libya, currently being implemented by the Subregional Office in six countries, along with its work on combating poverty and promoting the employment of young people and women's.

23. Addressing the Libyan delegate's question, the secretariat indicated that, following a request from the Ministry of Finance of Libya for assistance in revamping the regulatory system for the mining sector, ECA had not managed to meet with representatives of the Ministry to appoint teams of experts and effectively launch the project. Notwithstanding, the secretariat restated the interest of the Subregional Office and ECA headquarters in this initiative as part of its upcoming work programme with Libya.

24. Upon reviewing the activities of the Subregional Office and its work programme for 2022, the Committee took note with interest of the substantial efforts made and commended the

Subregional Office for its continued commitment to assisting member States, as set out in the work programme for 2022.

25. In closing the discussions, the secretariat noted the comments and recommendations of the Committee.

## **VII. Consideration and adoption of recommendations and the report of the thirty-sixth session of the Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts [agenda item 7]**

26. The Committee approved a two-week timeframe for the secretariat to consolidate and send out the recommendations of its thirty-sixth session, as reflected in annex I to the present report. The Committee also encouraged the participants from the countries of the subregion to submit their proposals for amendments to the Subregional Office within a maximum time limit of two weeks, to allow the secretariat to include them in the final report.

27. In line with these observations, the Committee adopted the present report and instructed the secretariat to forward the recommendations of the Committee to the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development for consideration at its next session.

## **VIII. Date and venue of the next session of the Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts [agenda item 8]**

28. The secretariat highlighted the need to agree on the date and venue of the next session. It stipulated that countries wishing to host the thirty-seventh session of the Committee should submit their requests to do so within one month of the conclusion of the thirty-sixth session. Should no requests be received from any member State, the session would be held in Rabat in the last week of October 2022.

29. The secretariat stipulated that member States would receive the report on the thirty-sixth session of the Committee in the coming two weeks. The Subregional Office would wait for feedback thereon from member States. Should no feedback be received, the report would be considered as final.

## **IX. Other matters [agenda item 9]**

30. No other business was raised at the conclusion of the Committee's discussions.

## **X. Closing of the session [agenda item 10]**

31. The Chair of the incoming Bureau extended his thanks to the Government of Morocco for hosting the session, as well as to Algeria for presiding over the thirty-fifth session of the Committee. He congratulated the Subregional Office and member countries on the success of the session. He then declared the proceedings of the thirty-sixth session of the Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts for North Africa closed.

## Annex I

### **Recommendations of the thirty-sixth session of the Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts for North Africa**

At the conclusion of its deliberations, the Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts for North Africa issued the recommendations below and requested the Bureau to convey them to the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development.

The Economic Commission for Africa, through its Subregional Office for North Africa, is requested to do the following:

1. To re-examine its data collection process in consultation with member countries, to ensure the timely receipt of the data required to prepare the subregional profiles;
2. To refer first to the data published on the official websites of member countries when preparing reports;
3. To implement the Integrated Planning and Reporting Tool in Morocco and tailor it to the specific context of sectoral planning and the recent launch of the new model for development to 2035;
4. To provide Libya with technical support in connection with migration, consistent with efforts underway in Morocco and other countries;
5. To consider the difficulties likely to hamper the implementation of programmes in view of the situation in Libya, in particular in connection with the monitoring and evaluation of activities;
6. To deliver technical assistance to Libya in fostering youth employment, in line with ongoing national initiatives by the Government and international organizations.



## **Annex II**

### **Agenda**

1. Opening of the session.
  2. Election of officers.
  3. Adoption of the agenda and programme of work.
  4. Evolution of economic and social conditions in North Africa: regional profile review – North Africa.
  5. Review of the implementation of regional and international development agendas and special initiatives.
  6. Statutory matters: Report on the activities of the Subregional Office for North Africa of the Economic Commission for Africa for the period October 2020– September 2021 and the work programme for 2022.
  7. Consideration and adoption of the recommendations and the report of the thirty-fifth session of the Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts.
  8. Date and venue of the next session.
  9. Other matters.
  10. Closing of the session.
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