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Economic Commission for Africa
Committee of Experts of the Conference of African
Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development
Fortieth meeting
Dakar (hybrid), 11–13 May 2022

Item 7 of the provisional agenda*

Date, venue and theme of the fifty-fifth
session of the Commission

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Note by the secretariat

I. Introduction

1. The present document sets forth suggestions by the secretariat for the consideration of the Committee of Experts. The Committee may wish to consider the dates and a theme for the fifty-fifth session of the Commission, to be held in 2023, and to provide the secretariat with guidance in that regard.

II. Date and venue

2. The secretariat proposes that the fifty-fifth session of the Commission be held at the headquarters of the Economic Commission for Africa, in Addis Ababa, on dates in March or April 2023. Alternatively, the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development may decide otherwise, upon an invitation by a member State to host the said session, under the condition that, in accordance with resolution 40/243 of the General Assembly, such member State has agreed to defray the actual additional cost directly and indirectly involved with holding the meeting away from the headquarters of the Commission.

III. Theme

3. The secretariat submits the following topic for the consideration of the Committee of Experts: Fostering Africa's recovery and transformation to reduce inequality and vulnerability.

* E/ECA/COE/40/1.



A. Background

4. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has exposed and deepened pre-existing inequality and brought many aspects of the continent's vulnerability to the forefront. Stressed or compromised supply chains, shortages of goods and weakened infrastructure all laid bare the extent to which Africa remains beholden to external forces. Techniques that were once useful in mitigating such risks and smoothing consumption have been largely ineffective in addressing pandemic-induced demand and supply shocks and uncertainty.

5. Following the acute phase of the COVID-19 crisis, Africa was expected to piggy-back off soaring global demand. With the crisis in Ukraine adding another layer of shocks to already inherent vulnerability, Africa is now faced with exposure to additional risk relating to food, fuel and financing; 41 African economies are severely exposed to at least one of the three types of risk, and 25 are severely or significantly exposed to all three. The double shocks of a still unfolding COVID-19 pandemic and the Ukraine crisis are exacerbating inequality and vulnerability in Africa through additional pressure on global supply chains. This has put in sharp relief the need for Africa to improve its resilience and insulate itself from external shocks.

6. Furthermore, the varied effects of extreme weather events continue to exemplify the uneven impact of climate change on populations around the world. Due to their heterogenous draw on natural resources, poverty and inequality are critical variables in the equation of climate-change vulnerability. Considering the multidimensional and fluid nature of such vulnerability, a dynamic social and economic approach is required to effectively mitigate and adapt to climate change. In this regard, estimating and hedging against the risk of vulnerability is an essential part of the policy landscape for building forward better. The green recovery and transition that are being promoted, and the deep transformation that they entail, can help to make economies and societies fairer and more sustainable. Indeed, a forward-looking policy approach is needed to increase the continent's resilience and support it moving forward.

B. Ensuring holistic multisectoral policies and plans of action

7. Given the challenges described above, the theme proposed for the fifty-fifth session of the Commission, "Fostering Africa's recovery and transformation to reduce inequality and vulnerability", is thus quite timely. While the issues of growing inequality and vulnerability are not new, the daunting challenges that they pose have yet to be examined by the Conference of Ministers in a systematic and holistic manner. A sharper focus on inequality in terms of effort, opportunity, income and assets provides additional insight into the nature of vulnerability, and broadens the policy options for tackling inequality and vulnerability. There is a growing and renewed sense of urgency for Africa to adopt a comprehensive approach to dealing with the distinct but interrelated dimensions of inequality, vulnerability, poverty, growth and transformation.

8. The continent's efforts to address social and economic inequality are compounded by its ongoing struggle to finance and implement plans to recover from the devastation arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. Although income inequality remains a useful and common metric for gauging the extent of inequality, identifying individuals and populations at risk of poverty, inequality and vulnerability is a multifaceted endeavour. Effectively tackling these issues thus requires a broad, multidimensional and integrated planning framework as the foundation for a coordinated, comprehensive and multisectoral plan of action. In the face of unfolding risks and uncertainty in the external environment, such a plan of action must avoid steps that could lead to welfare

losses and discrimination against the most vulnerable populations, while striking a balance among macroeconomic stabilization, sustainable growth and social protection.

C. Fostering shared prosperity and resilience

9. The 2023 session of the Commission presents an opportunity and high-level platform for the Conference of Ministers to holistically delve into the persistent issues of growing inequality and vulnerability that could derail the continent's recovery process and transformation. To achieve common, more robust, greener and more balanced development, African countries must tackle these challenges collaboratively and collectively, and adopt integrated approaches to making social and economic recovery and development more equitable, effective and inclusive, thereby ensuring that no one is left behind. To that end, countries must enhance their foresight capacity in a commensurate manner to anticipate shocks and design solutions accordingly.

10. As championed by Economic Commission for Africa through its integrated planning and reporting toolkit, the integration of national development plans with global and regional development agendas (namely the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union), along with inclusive and effective implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area, offers immense opportunities to address the inequality and vulnerability question.

11. By providing a holistic view of priorities and actions to be taken to achieve equitable growth and transformation, forward-looking development plans and strategies provide a solid foundation for African countries to mobilize domestic and external resources to finance their sustainable development. In this regard, the 2023 session of the Commission would build on the themes of the previous sessions by deliberating on the way forward for African countries to put in place integrated national financing frameworks that promote reliance on domestic resources, thereby expanding the policy space for reducing inequality and vulnerability.

D. Previous themes

12. For reference, a list of the themes of the Commission sessions that have been held since the year 2000 is provided in the annex to the present document.

Annex

Themes of previous sessions of the Commission

<i>Session</i>	<i>Joint annual meetings of the Economic Commission for Africa and the African Union Commission</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Theme</i>
Fifty-third	N/A	2021	Africa's sustainable industrialization and diversification in the digital era in the context of COVID-19
Fifty-second	N/A	2019	Fiscal policy, trade and the private sector in a digital era: a strategy for Africa
Fifty-first	N/A	2018	African Continental Free Trade Area and fiscal space for jobs and economic diversification
Fiftieth	Tenth	2017	Growth, inequality and unemployment
Forty-ninth	Ninth	2016	Towards an integrated and coherent approach for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
Forty-eighth	Eighth	2015	Implementing Agenda 2063: planning, mobilizing and financing for development
Forty-seventh	Seventh	2014	Industrialization for inclusive and transformative development in Africa
Forty-sixth	Sixth	2013	Industrialization for an emerging Africa
Forty-fifth	Fifth	2012	Unleashing Africa's potential as a pole of global growth
Forty-fourth	Fourth	2011	Governing development in Africa
Forty-third	Third	2010	Promoting high-level sustainable growth to reduce unemployment in Africa
Forty-second	Second	2009	Enhancing the effectiveness of fiscal policy for domestic resources mobilization
Forty-first	First	2008	Meeting Africa's new challenges in the twenty-first century
Fortieth	N/A	2007	Accelerating Africa's growth and development to meet the Millennium Development Goals: emerging challenges and the way forward
Thirty-ninth	N/A	2006	Meeting the challenge of employment in Africa
Thirty-eighth	N/A	2005	Achieving the Millennium Development Goals in Africa
Thirty-seventh	N/A	2004	Mainstreaming trade policy in national development strategies
Thirty-sixth	N/A	2003	Accelerating Africa's progress and performance: the challenge of the New Partnership for Africa's Development
Thirty-fifth	N/A	2002	Accelerating Africa's progress and performance: the challenge of the New Partnership for Africa's Development
Thirty-fourth	N/A	2001	Implementing the Millennium Partnership for the African Recovery Programme: compact for Africa's recovery
Thirty-third	N/A	2000	The challenges of financing development in Africa