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**Economic Commission for Africa
Conference of African Ministers of Finance,
Planning and Economic Development**

Fifty-second session

Marrakech, Morocco, 25 and 26 March 2019

Item 6 of the provisional agenda*

Consideration and adoption of the ministerial statement

Ministerial statement

We, African ministers of finance, planning, economic development and integration,

Meeting in Marrakech, Morocco, on 25 and 26 March 2019, for the fifty-second session of the Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development,

Having deliberated on the theme “Fiscal policy, trade and the private sector in a digital era: a strategy for Africa”,

Do hereby:

1. *Note* that the gross domestic product of Africa grew at a rate of 3.2 per cent in 2018, down from 3.4 per cent in 2017, and that economic growth is expected to recover to 3.4 per cent in 2019 owing, primarily, to strengthened global demand for African products, rising commodity prices, robust private consumption and sustained investments in infrastructure;

2. *Recognize* that the continent has made progress towards achieving desired economic and social outcomes, with poverty and inequality rates declining in the various subregions, albeit at a slow pace and that a number of challenges remain, including the need to substantially increase economic growth rate in order to create jobs and improve living standards, in particular for vulnerable segments of the population such as women and young people;

3. *Acknowledge* that the broadening and diversifying of sources of government revenue are a prerequisite for increased public investment in economic and social sectors, and that there is considerable scope for leveraging private-sector sources of finance to complement government financing to attain the Sustainable Development Goals;

4. *Also acknowledge* that African economies face major financing gaps and challenges in the mobilization of domestic resources, despite the implementation of several fiscal and budgetary reforms;

5. *Recognize* that digitization may enhance fiscal policy performance and development finance by increasing domestic revenue generation and allocation and reducing the cost of revenue collection, and by facilitating trade

* E/ECA/CM/52/1/Rev.1.

and private sector investment and development that foster growth and job creation and reduce gender inequality;

6. *Note* that smartphone penetration rose from 37 per cent in 2017 to 44 per cent in 2018 and is projected to increase to 51 per cent in 2019, which will facilitate the engagement of the private sector in local manufacturing, retail applications and service development;

7. *Acknowledge* that, while digitization provides numerous new opportunities for streamlining and improving relations with taxpayers and harnessing efficiency gains, it has also given rise to a number of emerging threats and challenges and that limited Internet access in Africa continues to impede the development of digitization in economic and social sectors, including e-commerce, e-health and e-government, which are constrained by high transaction costs, the spatial distribution of information exchanges, and limited access to international markets;

8. *Note* that Governments need to design and improve innovative digital mechanisms that facilitate revenue collection and increase the efficiency of tax administration by promoting the use of online platforms for self-reporting by taxpayers and the use of digital mechanisms to record relevant data on transactions and the identity of taxpayers;

9. *Acknowledge* the need to increase significantly the availability of high-quality and timely data with a view to supporting fiscal policy, trade and private sector development in the digital era and strengthening the implementation of national development plans, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union;

10. *Also acknowledge* the corresponding need for a stronger commitment by member States to allocate adequate financial, technical and human resources in support of the production, dissemination and use of statistics;

11. *Recognize* that censuses are indispensable tools for promoting development in Africa and providing robust data to support the implementation and monitoring of national development plans, the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 and, in this respect, urge all member States to undertake the 2020 round of population and housing censuses in Africa;

12. *Note* that civil registration provides individuals with legal documents required to secure their identity, nationality, civil rights and access to social services and, in this respect, recognize the need to develop and strengthen civil registration and vital statistics information systems and infrastructure as a foundation for a legal identity, including effective digital identity systems;

13. *Recognize* that harmonized and interoperable civil registration and digital identity form foundational legal identification systems that provide proof of legal identity necessary for multiple functional purposes;

14. *Note* that progress has been made in regional integration and commit ourselves to taking measures and steps to enhance the incorporation into domestic law and implementation of regional integration agreements and treaties, including the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area;

15. *Take note* that, in terms of its infrastructure development, Africa continues to lag behind other regions, acknowledge the need to strengthen resource mobilization in order to close the infrastructure gap and also to build the technical capacity necessary for the preparation of bankable cross-border infrastructure projects and, in this respect, commit ourselves to strengthening

cooperation, in particular among landlocked least developed countries and transit countries, in the development and management of cross-border infrastructure;

16. *Recall* the commitment made by Member States pursuant to General Assembly resolution 73/242 of 20 December 2018, to convene the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries at the highest possible level, including Heads of State and Government, in 2021, and the commitment of the Commission, in collaboration with the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, to organize an African regional review meeting in 2020 prior to that conference;

17. *Acknowledge* the support provided by the United Nations system to the organs of the African Union at regional and subregional levels within the framework of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa, and request the General Assembly to strengthen the subregional coordination mechanisms and their secretariats through the provision of adequate human and financial resources;

18. *Recognize* that State-owned and private rail operating companies incur considerable costs when renewing or extending their rail infrastructure and in financing rolling stock, making it essential to attract private capital and foreign investment, and that the Protocol to the Convention on International Interests in Mobile Equipment on Matters specific to Railway Rolling Stock, which extends the application of the Convention on International Interests in Mobile Equipment to all railway equipment, is an important financing facilitating instrument that enables member States to conclude agreements with public and private lenders and lessors of railway rolling stock;

19. *Acknowledge* and appreciate the commendable capacity development activities that are being undertaken by the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning, reiterate our commitment to ensuring the sustainability of the Institute through the payment of annual assessed contributions and the settlement of outstanding contribution arrears and call upon the United Nations and, in particular, the Commission and its partners to increase their support to the Institute in the interests of structural transformation in Africa;

20. *Note* the 2020 programme priorities of the Commission, reaffirm our commitment to support the proposed budget and call upon the United Nations to approve the Commission's 2020 plan and budget as presented to this Conference;

21. *Also note* the review of the intergovernmental structure, its findings and recommendations and endorse the proposed adjustments to the intergovernmental structure of the Commission, including the new sectoral subsidiary organs and the change of name of the subregional intergovernmental committees of experts to "intergovernmental committees of senior officials and experts".

Vote of thanks

22. We thank in particular, His Majesty King Mohammed VI, the Government of the Kingdom of Morocco and the Moroccan people for having hosted the Conference, for the excellent facilities made available to us and for their warm hospitality.

23. Lastly, we wish to extend our gratitude to the Economic Commission for Africa for successfully convening the fifty-second session of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development.
