Seventeenth (17th) Meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts (ICE) of West Africa

February 2014

Yamoussoukro (Côte d’Ivoire)

AIDE-MEMOIRE
I. Background

The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), created by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC), is one of the five regional commissions of the United Nations, the mandate of which is to promote the economic and social development of their Member States. The five Sub-Regional Offices (SRO) of the ECA make it possible for the Commission to translate its normative and analytical work into operational activities at the sub-regional level. These Offices fulfill their mandate by providing technical assistance to the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and to Member states on the harmonization of policies, including advice responding to the particular needs of Member States; by facilitating regional integration; and by serving as focal points for the dialogue on policies and the sharing of information between the Commission and all the actors concerned in the sub-regions.

The Intergovernmental Committee of Experts (ICE), composed of high-level government experts from Member States, controls the activities of each Sub-Regional Office and supervises the development and overall implementation of its Programme of Work, including the formulation of the priority objectives for the respective sub-regions. The Committee provides an orientation for the programmes of the SRO and makes recommendations in order to resolve issues affecting the economic and social development in each sub-region. The orientation is provided by the Committee in such a way as to totally integrate sub-regional priorities into the ECA Programme of Work. The ICE assembles once a year and the meeting is hosted, at its request, by a Member state of the sub-region. The recommendations of the ICE are normally presented for examination by the joint meeting of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance and the Economy of the African Union (AU) and the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development of the ECA. As the governing body of the ECA, the ICE thus constitutes an important forum for redefining the legislative mandate of the Commission and for strengthening the relevance of its work at the sub-regional level.

The key role of the SROs was underlined again in the ongoing process of the repositioning of the ECA based on the alignment of its priorities and the programme of work to the Programmes of AU Commission and the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) at the regional level and to those of RECs which constitute the essential components for the regional integration programme in Africa. This repositioning led the ECA to establish operational partnerships with the African Development Bank (AfDB), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other agencies of the United Nations and development partners on the basis of their respective comparative advantages. The repositioning made it possible for the SROs to develop multi-year programmes with the RECs in order to provide the required technical assistance in support of ongoing development efforts in the sub-region. In West Africa, the multi-year programme signed with the Commission of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in 2007 formed the basis of the collaboration and joint programmes implementation by the two institutions. The importance of the SROs as anchors for collaboration was once again underlined in the United Nations regional and sub-regional coordination mechanisms for Africa and its sub-regions; which make it possible for the United Nations System to apply the principle of "One UN" by providing assistance to the RECs and to other Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs) in the framework of the implementation of the NEPAD programmes, of the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and of other sub-regional development initiatives.
The SRO for West Africa (SRO-WA), based in Niamey in Niger, covers fifteen countries, which are all Member States of the ECOWAS region. The activities of the SRO-WA are extended to the following countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. Experts from these Member states form the ICE for West Africa.

The 17th Meeting of the ICE for West Africa will be held from 3 to 4 of March 2014 in Yamoussoukro in Côte d'Ivoire with the theme, “Food security in West Africa: what is the contribution of the industrialization of agricultural activities?”

II. The objective and theme of the 17th Meeting of the ICE

The objective of the 17th Meeting of the ICE consists of enabling the Member states of the ECOWAS and other counterparts in West Africa to examine the economic and social developments of the sub-region and to share experiences in order to resolve the difficulties related to growth and development. Among these is the great difficulty for the States of West Africa to carry out the structural transformation of their economies by, inter alia, industrialization. The choice of this theme follows the 2013 Economic Report on Africa prepared by the ECA, titled, “Making the Most of Africa’s Commodities: Industrialization for Growth, Jobs and Economic Transformation,” which includes recommendations on the ways and means for strengthening the role of the industrial sector as engine of development.

The theme of this 17th session of the ICE puts greater emphasis on the imperious necessity for the sub-region to tap into its immense agricultural, mining and energy potential for accelerated growth and development in conformity with the ECOWAS Vision 2020. The unexploited potential for creating added value in all of the natural resource value chains is an important component of development that the sub-region must include in its overall development strategy. The exploitation of this enormous agricultural potential will contribute, among other things, to the achievement of the MDGs, to the strengthening of socio-economic development and to the acceleration of progress to respond to the aspirations of the ECOWAS Vision 2020.

The priority action areas for this Vision are supported by specific strategies and objectives. The strategies include, for example, facilitating the development of optimal yield agricultural production, conducting technical research, developing efficient value chains in the agro-industrial sector, promoting private investments in agriculture and activities to enable access to appropriate technologies. The modernization of the sector through the introduction and adoption of efficient technologies to improve the production and development of different value chains will strengthen the role of agriculture in development, including its contribution to the achievement of the MDGs.

The common agricultural policy of the ECOWAS (ECOWAP) adopted in 2005 and based on the principles and priorities of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme of the NEPAD (CAADP-NEPAD), which is the framework for agricultural development in the sub-region, was developed to increase the productivity and exports of the agriculture sector, to achieve food security for the Member States and to promote sustainable livelihoods for farmers. In addition, the regional agricultural investment programme for the operationalization of the ECOWAP and the CAADP-NEPAD seeks to liberate all the development potential of the sector. Discussions during this Meeting of the ICE will come out with relevant recommendations in the framework of the ECOWAS Vision for the sector.
These recommendations will be taken into account during the joint meeting of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development of the ECA which will be held in Abuja, Nigeria, from March 27 to April 1, 2014 with the theme, “Industrialization for Sustainable Inclusive Development in Africa”.

The 17th Meeting of the ICE will be preceded by an Ad Hoc Meeting of Experts to Monitor Progress on Macroeconomic Policy and Institutional Convergence in West Africa.

III. Participation

The 17th Meeting of the ICE will bring together representatives from Member states in West Africa, from the African Union Commission (AUC), from the ECOWAS, from the Mano River Union (MRU), from the AfDB, from the World Bank, from the NEPAD and from other agencies of the United Nations. Invitations will be sent to other development partners, to Non-Governmental Organizations (ONGs) and other IGOs.

IV. Expected outcomes

The expected outcomes of the 17th Meeting of the ICE of West Africa are the following:

- a stronger commitment accompanied by precise timeframes from the Member States to accelerate their industrial development by setting up rational incentives and protections measures aiming at enabling investment for harnessing natural resources potentials to promote growth and development;
- an increased awareness by Member States of the economic and social difficulties facing the sub-region and of the need to develop strategies to overcome them;
- a closer collaboration among the ECOWAS, the WAEMU and other intergovernmental organizations;
- a larger scale dissemination of the problems of the sub-region and of consensual strategies with the objective of contributing to an ECOWAS of Peoples; and
- a more active involvement of Member states in the work of the SRO-WA and in the programmes developed to provide assistance to Member States.

V. Documentation

Discussions during the 17th Meeting of the ICE will be supported by a detailed thematic report on the exploitation of the agricultural sector potential in favor of growth and development in West Africa. Other reports that will be presented during this ICE Meeting include:

- The annual review of economic and social conditions in West Africa in 2013 and the outlook for 2014;
- The status of the implementation of the SRO-WA Programme of Work in 2013 and the Programme of Work for 2014;
- The implementation of regional and international plans of action progress and outlook for the MDGs in West Africa;
- The report on the industrial strategy for sustainable food security in West Africa; and
- The reports of other cooperation partners.
VI. Results of the Meeting

The results of the 17th Meeting of the ICE will include:

- Recommendations to resolve the socio-economic difficulties facing the sub-region;
- Recommendations to improve the industrialization process to promote high growth for countries of the sub-region and more inclusive development;
- An ICE that is well informed on the work of the ECA and the SRO-WA, on the SRCM of the United Nations for Central and West Africa and on the multi-year cooperation programme of the ECOWAS/ECA;
- The final declaration of the Meeting;
- The report on the Meeting (which will be produced after the Meeting); and
- The press communiqué.

VII. Date and place

The Meeting will be held in Yamoussoukro (Côte d’Ivoire) from 3 to 4 of March 2014 at the Hotel President of Yamoussoukro.

VIII. Administrative arrangements

The SRO-WA of the ECA and the Ivoirian Government will take care of all local-level logistics, including hotel reservations, airport reception and shuttles (transportation services) to and from hotels. It is recommended to participants to provide to the SRO-WA of the ECA all information on their itineraries before February 15, 2014 at the latest, in order to facilitate the preparation of required logistics arrangements.

Additional details on other administrative arrangements will be provided in the information note which will be sent to participants who have confirmed their participation.

IX. ECA/SRO-WA Contacts

Confirmation of participation, requests for further information and any other inquiries on the Meeting should be addressed to:

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