Consideration and adoption of the draft resolutions
of the Committee of Experts

Introductory remarks by Zouhair Chorfi
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Chair of the Bureau of the Committee of Experts of the Conference
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26 March 2019
Marrakech, Morocco
Mr. Chair,
Your Excellency, Madam Vera Songwe, Executive Secretary, Economic Commission for Africa,
Honourable Ministers,
Distinguished guests
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour and a privilege to submit to you, for your information, the report of the thirty-eighth meeting of the Committee of Experts of the Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development. The report carries the symbol E/ECA/CM/52/2/Rev.1, dated 22 March 2019.

Mr. Chair, Honourable Ministers, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This report contains the outcome of our deliberations over the past three days, including some 60 recommendations, which have been translated into eight draft resolutions for your consideration and adoption. I am pleased to note that we had very rich and robust discussions on the theme of the Conference, “Fiscal policy, trade and the private sector in a digital era: a strategy for Africa”, and on the statutory issues of the Economic Commission for Africa.

With regard to the theme of the meeting, member States discussed extensively the relationship between digitization and benefits, governance, capacity development, the role of the informal sector and regional perspectives and support for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. The Committee highlighted
the need for appropriate policies and governance frameworks for
digitization that are inclusive and adequately financed. On the issue of
digital security, the Committee extensively discussed such areas as
cybercrime, digital signature, the misuse or inadequacy of information
and data security. In relation to capacity development, the Committee
called for harnessing the full potential of the digital economy and for
countries to avail themselves of opportunities for intraregion peer
learning and South-South cooperation. Investments were needed in
infrastructure, such as optical fibre cable, and in efforts to improve
Internet penetration. Noting the importance to African economies of
the informal sector, whose economic activities were unregistered and
therefore untaxed, experts observed that digitization could create a
reliable system that enabled Governments to identify and register
taxpayers. Experts also highlighted the application of digitization in
the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and shared experience in that
area.

In the light of its discussions, the Committee recommended that
member States should harmonize their approaches to digitization to
ensure that the information technology systems on the continent are
interoperable, and to strengthen their tax administrative capacity by
hiring, maintaining, incentivizing and retaining competent tax
officials proficient in and able to administer complex tax laws,
coupled with measures to ensure their integrity.

The Committee also requested the Economic Commission for
Africa to work with African countries to finalize the terms of
reference of the centre of excellence on digital identity, trade and
economy and to regularly monitor the opportunities and threats
brought about by digitization of the economies of African countries.
The Committee also called upon the Commission, in collaboration
with the African Union Commission, urgently to finalize development
of the strategy for digital identity, digital trade and digital economy for Africa, taking maximum advantage of the positive experiences of African countries, and to assist countries to develop a common position on multilateral frameworks to tackle base erosion and profit shifting.

On the statutory issues, the secretariat presented 12 reports, including the report of the Executive Secretary on the activities of ECA (covering the period April 2018 to March 2019); the report on the meetings of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts; a progress report on the work of the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning; and the 2020 programme plan and budget. A resolution on the Commission’s 2020 programme plan and budget was discussed by the Committee of Experts.

The resolution on the 2020 programme plan and budget is hereby submitted for your consideration and adoption, along with seven other resolutions. These are the following:

1. Data and statistics
2. The mid-term review of the Vienna Programme of Action for the Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024
3. The review of the intergovernmental structure of the Economic Commission for Africa pursuant to its resolution 943(XLIX) and resolution 957(LI)
4. The Luxembourg Protocol to the Convention on International Interests in Mobile Equipment on Matters specific to Railway Rolling Stock
5. Progress in the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–
2020 and preparation for the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries

6. Fiscal policy, trade and the private sector in a digital era: a strategy for Africa

7. Digitization and the digital economy initiative

Mr. Chair, Honourable Ministers, Distinguished Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I thank you for your attention.