Addis Ababa, 3 March 2021, ECA – Investment Facilitation is increasingly becoming an area of focus in the investment discourse in Africa, and is expected to be central to the impending African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) negotiations of the protocol on investment, said Stephen Karingi of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA).

Karingi, Director in the Regional Integration and Trade Division of the ECA, spoke today at a High-level Virtual Roundtable on Investment Facilitation for Development, focussing on benefits and challenges of international investment facilitation frameworks for development for African economies.

Noting that foreign direct investment (FDIs) in Africa had declined as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, he said investment policy makers had a huge challenge to redress the trend, and that revitalizing the flows was fundamental to the recovery of the continent’s economy.

“Investment facilitation will be critical to promoting greater value addition and industrialization in Africa which as you know is one of the fundamental pillars of the AfCFTA,” he said.

The roundtable was jointly organized by the ECA, the International Trade Centre (ITC), the German Development Institute (DIE), the African Union Commission (AUC), the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the World Economic Forum (WEF).

In her own speech, the Executive Director of the ITC, Pamela Coke-Hamilton, called on the event organizers to come together in what she described as a “partnership in action and partnership for action” to address the health and economic hardship created by the COVID-19 pandemic.
“We need to pool our resources and expertise to rebuild investment routes in Africa,” as the pandemic had left a devastating impact on investment, exemplified by the decline of about 40 percent in Africa’s FDI in 2020, said Coke-Hamilton.

Speaking on the AfCFTA, its head of trade promotion, Francis Mangeni, said all stakeholders, including governments, users and civil society, must take ownership of the bloc, adding that in partnership with all willing organizations around the world, it should be inclusive; “that means that women, young Africans and small to medium enterprises must equally benefit; nobody should be left behind,” he said.

Emphasizing on global interconnectedness, the WEF President, Børge Brend, said the world needed to act together for a recovery from the pandemic that is based on trade and investment.

According to him, “What is good for Africa is good for the world.”

WTO’s Deputy Director General Yi Xiaozhun in his contribution said Africa’s unique perspective and experience should feed into investment facilitation discussion in the WTO.

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