The 27th ICSOE Meeting of Southern Africa Elects a New Bureau to propel industrialization in Southern Africa

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Blantyre, Malawi, 14 October 2021 (ECA) - The 27th Meeting of the Inter-Governmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts (ICSOE) of Southern Africa elected Malawi as Chair, Mozambique as Vice-Chair and Zimbabwe as Rapporteur to lead the Bureau and promote inclusive industrialization, greater resilience and wealth creation. Delegates and participants from Angola, Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe representing Ministries of Agriculture, Commerce, Economic Development, Finance, Foreign Affairs, Industry and Trade, participated in the 27th ICSOE.

The meeting was officially opened by the Minister of Finance of the Republic of Malawi, Honourable Felix Mlusu, who called on member States to develop fiscal measures such as broadening the tax base that will help them to sustain debt. This will allow the Development Partners to supplement the member States’ budgets. Currently, member States are implementing budgets with large fiscal deficits averaging over 10 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), to fight the pandemic and sustain aggregate demand. Further, the pandemic has impacted debt levels through widening fiscal deficits as revenues shrink due to disruptions of economic activity as well as contraction of export receipts. Therefore, to build back better from this pandemic, He urged that, “the central dimension is the need to develop a people-centered recovery plan that focuses on well-being, improved inclusiveness, and reduced inequality. This calls for an inclusive and sustainable growth model that promotes resilience to external shocks, reduces poverty and inequality on a larger scale, and makes decent job creation a priority to absorb Southern Africa’s youth population”.

In her welcoming remarks, the ECA Executive Secretary and UN Under-Secretary General, Dr. Vera Songwe thanked member States for their active participation and congratulated the government and the people of Malawi for its election as the new
The out-going Chair of 26th ICSOE Bureau, Hon. Thabo Sofonea, Minister of Finance, Kingdom of Lesotho represented by Ms. Rethabile Maluke applauded the work of ECA-SRO-SA as the secreatriat. She appreciated the achievements in the region through technical support to member States and convening of the ICSOE.

In her closing remarks the ECA-SRO-SA Director, Eunice Kamwendo thanked the delegates from the eleven member States who continue to provide guidance on the nature of support from ECA, especially the areas of focus in support of regional socio-
economic development and addressing the special needs on member States. She promised delegates that SRO-SA will, “continue to sharpen their tools to serve them better”.

The meeting concluded with an outcome statement and it was resolved that the 28th ICSOE will be held in Maputo, Mozambique in 2022. Recommendations were proferred which appealed to UNECA, the UN family in general and development partners to help implement the industrialisation strategies through the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), harness opportunities from the blue, green and digital economies in order to create decent jobs, reduce poverty and inequality, and build back better.

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