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**SPECIAL SESSION OF THE LABOUR AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
COMMISSION OF THE AFRICAN UNION
WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA
23-25 APRIL 2014**

THEME: « *Employment, Poverty Eradication and Inclusive Development* »

Original: English

CONCEPT NOTE

A. INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

1. The Constitutive Act of the African Union (AU) in its Articles 14 to 16 established the Specialised Technical Committees (STCs), as an important technical organ of the Union. The STCs were originally established under Article 25 of the African Economic Community Treaty (the Abuja Treaty) and with the transformation of the OAU into the AU, the STCs were carried over by the Constitutive Act of the African Union. The STCs are expected to work in close collaboration with the various Departments of the Commission to facilitate well-informed inputs in their areas of specialisation to the work of the Executive Council. They should also, be involved in monitoring programme development and implementation by the AU and RECs on behalf of the Executive Council.
2. The Assembly through Decision Assembly/AU/Dec.227 (XII) adopted in February 2009, reconfigured the STCs. According to the reconfiguration, the Labour and Social Affairs Commission will be part of the STC on Social Development Labour and Employment. The operationalization of the STCs was to have commenced in 2013 but the Executive Council in its Decision EX.CL/Dec.701(XXI) deferred the commencement till January 2014.
3. In effect, this Special Session of the Labour and Social Affairs Commission will be the last meeting of only sectoral Ministers of Labour. In April 2015, when the 10th Ordinary Session of the LSAC would have been held, Ministers of Labour and social partners will meet alongside the Ministers of Social Development as the STC on Social Development, Labour and Employment, .

The Special Session of LSAC

4. The 19th Ordinary Session of the AU Executive Council decided (**EX.CL/Dec.648 (XIX)**) to hold a Special Session of the Labour and Social Affairs Commission (LSAC) to evaluate the implementation of the 2004 Ouagadougou Declaration and Plan of Action on Employment Promotion and Poverty Alleviation. The 9th Ordinary Session of the AU LSAC (Addis Ababa, April 2013) decided to convene the Special Session in Windhoek, Namibia, on 23-25 April 2014.
5. The Special Session takes place during the year-long celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the OAU/AU that commenced in 2013 and during which an African Agenda for the next 50 years is being developed (African Agenda 2063). The Special Session also convenes at a time when the international community is engaged in defining the Post 2015 Development Agenda. Hence, the Special Session could draw from a wealth of contemporary thoughts and information to enrich its outcomes, particularly as it relates to human capital development, job creation, social protection and inclusive development.

B. SITUATION OF EMPLOYMENT AND POVERTY 10 YEARS AFTER OUAGADOUGOU 2004

6. According to the Report on progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals in Africa, 2013¹, though the proportion of employed people living in poverty is declining, Africa, excluding North Africa, is off-track in seeking to halve poverty by 2015. Employment is recognized as a pathway to exiting poverty. Therefore, the need for increasing the pace and inclusiveness of

¹Sixth Joint Annual Meetings of the ECA Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development and AU Conference of Ministers of Economy and Finance, Abidjan, 21-24 March 2013

the growth process, as well as investment in social services and infrastructure to enhance the health, incomes and productivity of the active labour force. The continent is still hampered with a huge concentration of the majority of the workforce in the informal economy and rural sector which have low social protection coverage if any, low productivity and low income generation power. Furthermore, despite progress noted, Africa remains the least productive region in the world.

C. FOLLOW-UP IMPLEMENTATION REPORTS BY MEMBER STATES

7. According to the various biennial and the two Comprehensive follow-up reports (2009 and 2014), the Key Priority Areas (KPAs) 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6 of the 2004 Ouagadougou Declaration and Plan of Action on Employment Promotion and Poverty Alleviation were at the centre of implementation efforts of Member States. Member States raised the profile of employment promotion in their policy dialogue, including developing or reviewing their employment policies. They enhanced their capacity in employment policies M&E, and follow-up. They were also able to seek for more coherence and coordination in the area of labour and employment.
8. The main challenges in implementing the 2004 Ouagadougou Plan of Action were: (i) the large number of KPAs, Strategies and Recommendations; (ii) the lack of financial resources at all levels; (iii) the weakness of labour market institutions; (iv) the persistent weak political will with concrete commitment; (v) the poor coordination between institutions concerned by the challenges of the labour market. With regard to the mentioned challenges, the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) should have played a central role in the implementation process of the Plan of Action, but they did not have the required human capacity to so do.
9. In the process of implementing the 2004 Ouagadougou PoA, a set of other targeted policy instruments and programmes/projects were developed. Having concern for the fact that Africa is the least productive region in the world, the AU Executive Council engaged in a two-pronged strategy by adopting the Productivity Agenda for Africa coupled with the Social Dialogue Guidelines. In line with the Key Priority Area 4 of the 2004 Ouagadougou PoA, two instruments were enacted: the Programme on Upgrading the Informal Economy and the Social Protection Plan for the Informal Economy and Rural Workers (SPIREWORK). They reflect the priority of the AU Political Leadership for inclusive growth, equity and respect for rights of all categories of workers in the job market dominated by the informal economy and rural sectors.
10. Ten years after Ouagadougou 2004 and considering its achievements and drawbacks, AU leaders are determined to accelerate job creation in the continent, in particular for youth and women. They have therefore, decided to undertake a comprehensive assessment of ten years of implementation so as to take stock of achievements and challenges faced, as well as concrete actions to be taken in the next decade to create decent employment and accelerate poverty eradication in order to ensure inclusive development. It is in this context that the Special Session of the Labour and Social Affairs Commission will be held in Windhoek (Namibia) from 23 to 25 April 2014 to prepare the grounds for an Extraordinary Summit of Heads of States and Government in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, in September 2014.

D. OBJECTIVES OF THE SPECIAL SESSION OF THE AU LABOUR AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION

11. The overall objectives of the Special Session are the following:

- a. To provide opportunity for a High Level Participatory Evaluation/Assessment of the Ouagadougou 2004 Declaration and Plan of Action;
 - b. To facilitate building of Agreement/Consensus on the current and future challenges of labour markets and policy perspectives at all levels;
 - c. To adoption a Revised Policy Framework for the next decade on Labour, Employment and Social Protection: A new Declaration, Plan of Action and Follow-up Mechanism; and
 - d. To discuss Modalities for preparation of the Extraordinary Summit in September 2014.
12. To achieve the mentioned objectives, the Ouagadougou + 10 policy debate will focus on 6 Key Priority Areas and Goals on:
- a. Youth and Women Employment
 - b. Social Protection and Inclusive Growth, Informal Economy, Social Economy and Rural Employment
 - c. Productivity, Competitiveness and Social Dialogue
 - d. Labour Market Governance
 - e. Labour Migration and Regional Economic Integration
 - f. Partnership and Funding for implementation of employment policies

E. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

13. The main expected outcomes of the Special Session are the draft of the following revised documents: adoption of:
- a. Declaration on Employment, Poverty Eradication and Inclusive Development
 - b. Plan of Action on Employment, Poverty Eradication and Inclusive Development
 - c. Follow-Up Mechanism
11. Another important outcome will be the modalities for the organization of the Extraordinary Summit in Ouagadougou in September 2014 to ensure highest political commitment towards the implementation of the outcome policy instruments.

F. FORMAT OF THE MEETING

12. The meeting will be organized in two phases:

a. Experts Meeting: 23-24 April 2014

During the first two days of the Conference, experts/officials and social partners from Member States will consider relevant documents and make appropriate recommendations for the Ministers' consideration and approval.

b. Ministers Meeting: 25 April 2014

The Ministers will consider the Report of the Experts' Meeting, as well as accompanying documentation, including recommendations regarding the implementation of the Revised Declaration, Plan of Action and Follow-up Mechanism. The report of the Ministers will be adopted on 25 April.

G. AGENDA AND DOCUMENTATION:

13. The Special Session will consider the following key items:

- i. Thematic Paper: *"Employment, Poverty Eradication and Inclusive Development"*;
- ii. The revised Draft Declaration and Plan of Action on Employment, Poverty Eradication and Inclusive Development, and of the Follow-Up Mechanism;
- iii. Preparation of the Extraordinary Summit;
- iv. Implementation of the Youth and Women Employment Pact by AUC and RECs, AfDB and international partners ;Draft Joint AUC-ILO-IOM-ECA Programme on Labour Migration;
- v. Transformation from the informal to the formal economy: How to move the AU Policy instruments ahead;
- vi. Preparation of the Common Position on the Agenda Items of the 103rd ILC, June 2014: Election of the ILO Governing Body; and
- vii. Paper on Specialized Technical Committees.

14. Working documents for the Session will be the following:

- a) Background Paper for the thematic panel discussion
- b) The Draft Revised Declaration on Employment , Poverty Eradication and Inclusive Development;
- c) The Draft Plan of Action on Employment, Poverty Eradication and Inclusive Development, and Follow-up Mechanism;
- d) Paper by the Commission on Implementation of the Youth and Women Employment Pact by AUC and RECs, AfDB and international partners;
- e) Paper by the AUC on the preparation of the Extraordinary Summit;
- f) Paper by the AUC on the way forward for implementation of Policy instruments on Informal Economy in reparation of the ILC, Geneva, June 2014;
- g) Paper by the AUC on the Draft Joint AUC-ILO-IOM-ECA Programme on Labour Migration;

15. Reference Documents for the Conference will be the following:

- a) 2004 Ouagadougou Declaration, Plan of Action and Follow-up Mechanism;
- b) Programme on Upgrading of the Informal Economy;
- c) Social Protection Plan for the Informal Economy and Rural Workers (SPIREWORK);
- d) AU Migration Policy Framework;
- e) Productivity Agenda for Africa;
- f) Strategic Document on Resource Mobilization for the implementation of the 2004 Ouagadougou Plan of Action;
- g) SPIREWORK Communication Strategy;
- h) Labour Market Information Systems Harmonization and Coordination Framework (LMIS-HCF)
- i) Youth and Women Employment Pact;
- j) Intra African Technical Cooperation Platform;
- k) Follow-Up Biennial and Comprehensive Reports on the implementation of the Ouagadougou 2004 Declaration and Plan of Action;

- l) Malabo Declaration on Creating Employment to Accelerate Youth Employment and Empowerment;
- m) Good Practices on Youth and Women Employment, and on Labour market institution capacity development;
- n) Resolution L6 on “Promoting high-level sustainable growth to reduce unemployment in Africa”, Conference of Ministers of Finance, Economy and Development Planning, Lilongwe, March 2010; and
- o) Contribution Papers by UN Agencies.

H. METHODOLOGY

I. Consultations at National Level:

16. Member States are expected to establish National Inter-Sectoral bodies to coordinate the preparatory activities for the Special Session and for the Summit, including soliciting views on the documents to be presented to the Summit. A lead Ministry will coordinate and steer national consultations and will convene national consultation meetings within Member States. The aim is to support participation of Member States in the Ouaga + 10 process and facilitate buy-in and ownership of the outcomes of the process at the most important stage of implementation.

II. Special Session Web Platform:

17. A Web Platform will be established by the AUC to support the consultation process that will allow broad participation of the key stakeholders at national, regional and continental level.

III. Side Event:

18. Side Events will be organized in the form of working lunches and in-depth exchange on the following issues: (i) Social Protection and Inclusive Growth, (ii) Labour Migration and (iii) Youth and Women Employment.

I. PARTICIPANTS

19. Participants of the Special Session will be: The 54 AU Member States with their Tripartite Delegations according to the LSAC Rules of Procedure, the RECS, PAP, ECOSOCC, NEPAD, international partners, NGOs and CSOs, FBO, etc.
20. International partners that will be invited are: AfDB, ECA, ILO, UNIDO, UN- WOMEN, UNICEF, FAO, WFP, WHO, IOM, UNFPA, World Bank, IMF, EU, Arab League, etc.

J. ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

21. The AUC will be responsible for the invitations to Member States and the preparations of all related documents. Translation and interpretation services, and secretarial support, will be availed by the AUC.

K. BUDGET AND OTHER RESOURCES

22. While the AU Commission will contribute the amount earmarked in the budget for the convening of the Conference, financial and technical support might be provided by partner organizations to facilitate the preparation of documents and participation of representatives from CSOs, independent experts and resource persons.

L. FURTHER INFORMATION

23. Further information regarding the Special Session can be obtained from:

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