



# United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

The Tenth Joint Annual Meetings of the African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Finance, Monetary Affairs, Economic Planning and Integration and the Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development

## **Committee of Experts Meeting**

### **Opening Statement**

**By**

**Giovanie Biha**

**Deputy Executive Secretary**

**UN Economic Commission for Africa**

Thursday, 23 March 2017

Dakar, Senegal

**Votre Excellence, Monsieur Birima Mangara, Ministre du Budget du Senegal,  
Monsieur Lizenga Maluleka, Président du Bureau sortant du Comité d'experts,  
Monsieur Anthony Mothae Maruping, Commissaire aux affaires économiques de la Commission de l'Union africaine,  
Représentants du Gouvernement sénégalais,  
Excellences,  
Distingués délégués,  
Mesdames et Messieurs,**

Au nom de la Commission économique pour l'Afrique, c'est un honneur et un plaisir pour moi de vous souhaiter la bienvenue à la dixième Réunion annuelle conjointe du Comité technique spécialisé de l'Union africaine sur les finances, les affaires monétaires, la planification économique et l'intégration et de la Conférence des ministres africains des finances, de la planification et du développement économique de la Commission économique pour l'Afrique. Je souhaite exprimer notre profonde gratitude au Gouvernement et au peuple sénégalais pour les sentiments chaleureux et la grande générosité avec laquelle ils nous ont accueillis dans cette belle ville de Dakar. Nous sommes bien au pays de l'hospitalité légendaire qu'est la *téranga*.

The theme of this year's Conference is "Growth, Inequality and Unemployment". Why? Because the impressive economic growth achieved over the past 15 years has been paradoxically accompanied by high levels of inequality and unemployment. In January 2011, the Economist reported that six of the world's ten fastest-growing economies were in sub-Saharan Africa and that the IMF forecasts indicated Africa would grab seven of the top ten places over the following five years. Indeed, in June 2015, Business Insider listed six African countries among

the 13 fastest growing economies in the world. Yet, despite of this impressive growth, over the same period, seven of the ten most unequal countries in the world were also in Africa. This means that growth on the continent remains exclusive and has not yet translated into broad-based poverty reduction, improved livelihoods and employment opportunities for all.

Africa's youth in particular, which constitute more than 60% of the total population desperately seek economic opportunities on the continent to enable it to fulfil its aspirations and contribute its share to Africa's economic prosperity. The absence of decent jobs for young Africans has fuelled outward migration, both within and from Africa resulting in tragic loss of lives as young people attempt to cross the Mediterranean Sea in search for greener pastures. This year being the year of harnessing Africa's demographic dividend through investment in the youth must drive all stakeholders to promote investment in job creation and human capital development. As mentioned in Paragraph 5 of the Concept Note for this meeting, central to this, is the imperative **“for African countries to adopt coherent strategies and national development plans that promote structural transformation and address the challenges of growth, inequality and unemployment within the context of the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”**.

The continent's medium-term prospects remain positive, buoyed by strong domestic demand and investment (particularly in infrastructure), a robust service sector, recovery in commodity prices and the gradual diversification of oil exporting countries. The long-term growth prospects for Africa look promising, as the underlying fundamentals remain relatively strong. Africa's legion of young

men and women are a reason for hope and constitute a formidable asset which can be mobilized to spur economic and social transformation.

As mentioned in the Concept Note of this conference, in Paragraphs 9, 10 and 11, **“the discussion on growth-employment-poverty nexus is not new.... The Ouagadougou Declaration adopted at the Extraordinary Summit of the African Union held in September 2004 on employment and poverty reduction placed employment at the centre of development policies and programs in Africa by stressing the decisive role of employment in poverty reduction, and acknowledged that widespread poverty, unemployment and underemployment compromise basic human rights and dignity of individuals and communities.**

**Indeed the ECA prepared an issue paper on the theme “Meeting the challenge of the MDGs for the Conference of Ministers held in Abuja in 2005, which emphasized the role of employment in meeting the internationally agreed goals”. The theme of the ERA 2005 was “Meeting the challenges of Unemployment and poverty in Africa. “ Since 2010, subsequent reports in the Economic Report on Africa series have focused on promoting economic growth in Africa through structural transformation and moving towards industrialization. The 2010 report made a compelling case for targeting employment in the long term development plans to enable countries to embark on paths of high, sustainable and employment-friendly growth...”**

Over 12 years since the Ouagadougou Declaration, we are still discussing poverty and unemployment, and witnessing the same trends and challenges of rising unemployment and widening inequality despite more than 15 years of strong economic growth.

The challenges are numerous, but so are opportunities. Among the challenges, the overall drastic decline of economic growth in Africa in 2016, dropping to 1.7 per cent, compared to 3.7 per cent in 2015 and 3.9 percent in 2014. Even though commodity prices started to recover at the beginning of the year, they still remain below their 2014 levels.

Pour ce qui est de la dimension sociale, malgré les nombreuses avancées enregistrées par les indicateurs de l'éducation, de la santé et de la qualité de vie, le nombre d'Africains soumis à la pauvreté absolue reste très élevé. Les pauvres sont plus démunis en Afrique que dans les autres régions du monde. Et le fossé entre les nantis et les démunis continue de s'y creuser. Les niveaux d'inégalité à l'intérieur des pays africains sont élevés et compromettent l'effet réducteur que la croissance économique devrait avoir sur la pauvreté. Sans oublier que si des progrès notables ont été accomplis sur le continent en matière de parité des genres, cette évolution s'est elle aussi manifestée de façon inégale, l'inégalité des genres restant ainsi un des défis majeurs du développement africain.

Ce ne sont pas les opportunités qui manquent. Parmi ce ci, l'urbanisation rapide du continent et sa classe moyenne en pleine expansion, sont des tendances majeures qui, si elles sont bien gérées, ont un véritable potentiel transformateur. L'Afrique, étant la région du monde qui s'urbanise le plus rapidement, devrait voir plus de la moitié de sa population vivre et travailler dans les zones urbaines d'ici à 2025, ce qui en ferait un continent majoritairement urbain. D'où le thème de l'édition 2017 du *Rapport économique sur l'Afrique* : « Urbanisation et industrialisation au service de la transformation de l'Afrique ». Le Rapport cerne et analyse les difficultés et possibilités qui se font jour lorsqu'il s'agit d'optimiser l'avantage

urbain pour le mettre au service de l'industrialisation africaine, et il définit les moteurs, catalyseurs et politiques porteuses qui sont envisageables à cette fin.

In 2016 ECA in collaboration with the African Union Commission and the African Development Bank, continued to work on regional and economic integration, which are essential for industrialization, economic transformation and job creation. ECA also continued to provide technical and policy support to Member States and Regional Economic Communities on long term development planning, sound economic governance, integrated trade and industrial policies which are essential for Africa's social and economic transformation that is inclusive and sustainable.

In recognition of the importance of good governance to achieving the objectives agreed upon in the SDGs and Agenda 2063, the ECA strived to revitalize the African Peer Review Mechanism. More countries were encouraged to re-launch their respective self-assessments and national capacities for conducting external reviews were strengthened. The ECA remains strongly committed to supporting the vision of the African Peer Review Mechanism to track progress and share best practice in good governance in Africa.

Furthermore, the ECA partnered with the African Union Commission to establish a consortium on curbing illicit financial flows from Africa. This consortium comprises of key actors on the continent and outside of Africa and provides a platform for all relevant stakeholders to come together and share ideas on how to implement the findings and recommendations of the High-level Panel on Illicit Financial Flows, including through a clear delineation of the roles and responsibilities of all the actors involved. Advocacy from national and civil society

perspectives were also strengthened in the mobilization of efforts to substantially reduce illicit financial flows by 2030 and eventually eliminate them.

Within the context of supporting development planning and structural transformation, the ECA launched twenty comprehensive and analytical Country Profiles during the African Development Week in 2016 and will launch this week 21 more, with the intention to cover the continent by the end of this year. These Country Profiles provide an independent narrative of Africa's economic and social development experience and prospects as well as assess policy analysis and countries' progression towards regional integration and economic transformation.

### **Medames est Messieurs,**

Durant les deux jours qui suivent, notre tâche sera de réfléchir collectivement pour développer des stratégies et d'actions visant à surmonter les défis de la croissance, de l'inégalité et du chômage dans le cadre de l'Agenda 2063 de l'Union africaine et des objectifs de développement durable de l'Agenda 2030. Notre analyse de la situation actuelle, avec ses réalisations, ses contraintes et ses défis, ainsi que les opportunités et recommandations pour les actions futures serviront des lignes directrices de haut niveau pour les délibérations de nos ministres dans le cadre du segment ministériel qui suivra.

Les attentes sont énormes face aux défis (daunting) auxquels notre continent est confronté. Cependant, lorsque mon regard se pose sur l'assemblée d'experts chevronnés qu'abrite cette salle, j'ai la conviction que les deux journées de travail intense seront l'occasion de délibérations riches et perspicaces sur toutes ces questions et problématiques, et qu'elles déboucheront sur des recommandations pratiques sur la meilleur façon de gérer la trilogie de la croissance, de l'inégalité et

du chômage dans la perspective du développement économique durable et inclusif de l'Afrique.

Je vous souhaite de bonne deliberations.

Thank you, Merci, Djeureudjeuf!!