

AFRICAN UNION

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**5<sup>th</sup> CONGRESS OF AFRICAN ECONOMISTS**

**2017**

**THEME: “Growth, Employment and Inequalities”**

**ECONOMIC AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT**

## 1. Background and challenges

1.1. The 5<sup>th</sup> Congress of African Economists is organized around the major theme of “**Growth, employment and inequalities**”. The choice of the theme has been motivated by the fact that there are many outstanding questions regarding the level and pattern of growth required to create jobs and reduce inequalities within and between countries and Regions in Africa.

1.2. After two decades (the 80s and the 90s) of poor growth performance, Africa has started enjoying strong and continuous economic growth. Since the turn of the millennium, the growth accelerated across the entire continent and many countries frequently experienced annual double digit growth rates. In fact, the average growth rate is around 5% since 2000 while other regions have experienced a decline or a stagnation of their economic activity.

1.3. The global economy is being affected by the collapse of commodity and energy prices, the slowdown of the manufacturing and construction sectors of the Chinese economy, and the rebalancing of the latter toward consumption-oriented growth. Nevertheless, growth in Africa remains positive and is expected to recover by 4% compared to a projection of 3.4% at the global level. Sub-Saharan Africa is forecasted to remain one of the fastest growing regions.

1.4. However, there is no evidence of inequalities reduction over the period of high growth. In fact, the GINI index has increased from 0.42 to 0.46 over the period 2000 to 2010 (ADB, 2012) and six of the ten most unequal countries in the world are in Africa. The observed growth rate has not been pro-poor and inclusive enough. In addition, growth has not led to job creation for the additional workers from the increasing number of the workforce. Therefore, there is a crucial need to analyze the sources of growth and the drivers of inequality, and identify policies leading to a better distribution of the benefits of growth.

1.5. In the context of tight national budget constraints, raising alternative funds to finance sustainable growth and allocating optimally the resources between programs and sectors are points that need to be further explored.

1.6. High inequality reduces growth and its impacts on poverty by hampering potential investments of the disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. Reducing inequalities within and

between countries can lead to higher growth, fair societies and stability. Authorities should intervene by setting and coordinating efficient monetary and fiscal policies, including redistribution policies through taxes and equitable use of the benefits of growth. The African Union, through the Agenda 2063, is working towards this goal by continuing to engage Member States in setting strategies and policies for inclusive growth that generates jobs and reduces inequalities.

## **2. The Congress of African Economists**

2.1 The Congress will attract the participation of experienced economists from Think-Tanks, Governmental and Non-Governmental Organizations, Research Institutes, Universities, International Organizations, Continental and Regional Institutions. It will lead to the definition of a set of recommendations of economic policies and practical strategies derived from the inputs of participants. Our goal is to also provide young researchers a unique opportunity to interact with their peers, develop the spirit of good quality research, present their works on the theme and therefore disseminate the findings of their research.

2.2 To date, four editions of the African Economists Congress were organized. The first was held from 2 to 5 March 2009 in Nairobi under the theme: “**Towards the creation of the African single currency**”. The second was held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire from 24 to 26 November 2011 under the theme: " How to achieve strong and sustainable economic growth in Africa, in order to reduce unemployment and support the dynamics of integration regional and continental?" The third was held in Dakar, Senegal from 6 to 8 March 2013 under the theme "**Industrialization and economic emergence in Africa.**" and the fourth was held from 16 to 18 November 2015 in Accra, Ghana under the theme: “**Industrial Policy and Economic Performance in Africa**”.

2.3 Under the global framework of AU Agenda 2063, the 2017 Congress provides an ideal platform for interaction to review past and ongoing policies, their impact on economic performance and consider emerging policy options and strategies that can foster inclusive growth, employment and reduction of inequalities in the continent.

### 3. Objectives of the Congress of African Economists 2017

3.1 The Congress of African Economists 2017 specific objectives are:

- ***Integrate capacity building in wider efforts to achieve sustainable development and encourage dialogue between researchers***, African economic policy makers and the Diaspora in a track favorable to the maturation of the debate on the optimal policies for inclusive growth, full employment and inequality reduction;
- ***Strengthen and encourage research on economic and policy issues*** related to main the theme, the sub-themes and the development of the African continent;
- ***Provide an opportunity for African researchers and African Diaspora disseminate to the results of their research on theme*** and formulate operational recommendations to African policy makers;
- ***Emphasize skill retention and use*** by providing a unique platform to young African Economists in Africa and in the Diaspora to circulate their research findings as well as share information with African policymakers on the issues of growth, employment and inequalities in Africa;
- ***Adopt a learning-by-doing approach*** by promoting knowledge management as the main engine of policy dialogue, good policies planning and implementation.

3.2 Since its implementation in 2009, the Congress of African Economists served as a framework for exchanges between academics, researchers and practitioners of the economy.

### 4. Format of the 2017 Congress of African Economists

4.1 Organized under the Theme "**Growth, Employment and Inequalities in Africa**", the Congress of African Economists 2017 will also analyze the following sub-thematic areas:

1. ***The sources of growth;***
2. ***The distribution of the fruits of growth;***
3. ***Growth and exogenous shocks;***
4. ***Financing growth;***
5. ***The problem of unemployment in Africa;***
6. ***Growth and integration in Africa;***

- 7. How to reduce unemployment in Africa;*
- 8. Partnership and growth;*
- 9. Country experiences on the main theme and the sub-themes;*
- 10. Regional and world experiences on the main theme and the sub-themes;*
- 11. Coordination experience of monetary and fiscal policies in times of crisis;*
- 12. Monetary and fiscal policy: What options to boost growth and create employment?*

4.2 The Congress will comprise a number of plenary and parallel sessions that will feature presentations and discussions of eminent African scholars, policy makers, economic actors and representatives of multilateral development organizations.

4.3 Parallel sessions will allow more in-depth and technical analysis resulting in detailed discussions on strategic issues of the 2017 Congress. The sub-themes mentioned above will enable a broad range of discussions on the Growth, Employment and Inequalities in Africa and generate valuable insights for policy making.

4.4 The proposed articles must be original proposals related to the theme of the Congress that has not been previously published. Young African researchers are especially encouraged to submit articles. The most original articles will be published in the African Integration and Development Review of the Economic Affairs Department of the African Union Commission. Possibility will also be offered to the most talented researchers to present their work during the "Fridays of the Commission" in Addis Ababa.

## **5. Submission of articles and deadlines**

5.1 Authors must submit their work in accordance with instructions provided on the dedicated Congress of African Economists website: <http://pages.au.int/economists>

5.2 Articles must be submitted by **31 December 2016**.

5.3 Papers will be reviewed anonymously by the Scientific Committee of the African Integration and Development Review. The articles selected will be subject to discussion during the Congress and some published in the Review.

## **6. Expected Outputs**

6.1 The outputs of the Congress will include:

- a) Congress Report summarizing key findings and messages of key policy of relevance distilled from congress papers and keynote speeches;
- b) Congress Proceedings: a special volume of the *African Integration and Development Review* containing the most innovative articles of policy and operational relevance, as well as a proceedings book that publishes selected papers. This double publication finds useful application in policy making and subsequently in defining development priorities.

## **7. Financing and sponsoring**

7.1. The Congress of African Economists 2017 will be funded by the African Union Commission with the support of partners interested by the central theme and related sub-themes.

7.2 Researchers whose articles will be accepted by the evaluators will be receiving support to cover their expenses (travel, accommodation and daily subsistence allowance). Only one author per paper accepted for presentation will be eligible for support. Support is reserved for presenters and young African economists.

## **8. Contact information**

For more information about the Congress, kindly contact:

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