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**FOURTH ORDINARY SESSION OF THE SPECIALISED
TECHNICAL COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT,
LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT (STC-SDLE-4)
04-08 APRIL 2022
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA**

Theme: "Building Forward Better Well Being and Living Standards in Africa"

CONCEPT NOTE

I. INTRODUCTION

The Specialized Technical Committee (STC) on Social Development, Labour and Employment is one of fourteen (14) STCs, defined as an Organ of the African Union in accordance with Article 5 (1) (g) of the AU Constitutive Act. The STC on Social Development, Labour and Employment meets once every two (2) years. It is set as a ‘tripartite organ composed of Ministers in charge of Social Development, Labour and Employment or such other Ministers or Authorities duly accredited by the Governments of Member States, and the Representatives of the most representative Employers and Workers’ Organizations at national, regional and continental levels’¹.

The Fourth Session of the Specialized Technical Committee on Social Development, Labour and Employment (STC-SDLE-4) is scheduled to take place in fully virtual format from **04-08 April 2022** under the Theme: “***Building Forward Better Well Being and Living Standards in Africa***”. This theme is opportune in light of the COVID-19 health crisis which already affected the livelihoods, well-being and the living standards of the African populations, negatively impacting the indicators of the relevant targets of the Aspiration 1 of the First Ten Year Implementation Plan (2014-2023) of the AU Agenda 2063, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The pandemic has induced dire socio-economic impacts on the society and the labour market, and will have bearing on the implementation of social development and labour policies at national, regional and continental levels. “*The COVID-19 pandemic ... a worst economic, social and humanitarian crisis. The pandemic is disrupting millions of livelihoods, affecting poor households, diverting government revenues, damaging the private sector, the informal economy and the entire production systems; and deteriorating international trade and financial flows to the continent.*”²

The theme also offers an opportunity to anticipate relevant transformative actions on the implementation of the forthcoming AU Social Protection and Social Security Protocol, the Social Agenda of the AU Agenda 2063, which were both endorsed by the 3rd Ordinary Session of the STC for consideration, the Joint Labour Migration Programme as well as the Labour & Employment policy frameworks. The AU Social Agenda 2063 and Ten Year Plan on Child Labour, Forced Labour, Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery has since been adopted by the Executive Council in February 2020, while the Draft Social Agenda was referred to the STC on Justice and Legal Affairs billed for November 2020.

It is worth recalling that the 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, adopted a Resolution on ‘Financing social protection in Africa’ (Addis Ababa, 4 and 5 April 2016). They also adopted a second Resolution on the implementation of the First Five-Year priority programme for

¹ Rules of Procedures of the Specialized Technical committee on Social Development, Labour and Employment, Rule 3, XXVIII Ordinary Session, Au Executive Council, January 2016

² Report on “Socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 on Africa: An opportunity to build more endogenous and resilient emerging economies’, AUC, October 2020, page 7

the implementation of the Declaration and Plan of Action on Employment, Poverty Eradication and Inclusive Development.

II. RATIONALE

The Health Crisis and the Socio-economic Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Social Development and Labour Market

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are expected to affect the life and livelihoods of the population over the next 2-3 years, which covers the last 3 years of the First Ten Year Implementation Plan. This state of affairs sets the agenda of the AU Specialized Technical Committee in the coming years, therefore, calling for decision makers to address the induced challenges on social development, labour, employment and labour migration.

According to Poverty and Shared Prosperity Report 2020 (PSPR2020) XXX, COVID-19 is likely to push between 28.2 million and 49.2 million more Africans into extreme poverty and between 71 and 100 million at global level.

African economies are typically informal and about 25 to 30 million of jobs are at risk. According to AfDB (2020b), in 2019, about 773.4 million Africans were employed. This number was expected to rise 792.7 million in 2020. However, the pandemic could lead to around 25 to 30 million jobs losses in both in the formal and informal sectors. ILO's latest estimations (2020), 19 million of young populations (15-24) working in informal sector are at high risk in Africa to lose their jobs and nearly 64 million adults (25+) are in the same situation.

In line with the loss of jobs due to the pandemic leading to economic insecurity as mentioned above, this can lead to child marriage and female genital mutilation as a means to relieve financial pressure on a family. The risk of child marriage increases through various pathways, including economic shocks, school closures and interruptions in services. The evidence is also clear that education is a protective measure against child marriage and with girls being out of school and a disruption of 'non-essential' services including reproductive health services also have a direct impact on teenage pregnancy. In addition, there's been a growing risk of violence and sexual exploitation with higher incidents of gender based violence particularly against girls and women including domestic, sexual, physical, child marriages, FGM to name a few. In addition, with children doing online learning due to school closures, children are more at risk of being targeted by online predators and cyber abuse. Additionally, the propensity of increase in child labour cannot ruled out as research reports anticipate.

In this regard, the Commission has also developed an Africa focused extensive study for Member states and RECs on how girls and women have been disproportionately affected by the dire consequences of the pandemic focussing on gender based violence including harmful practices. The study aims at providing recommendations and guidance on the necessary interventions needed within the African context.

The Commission, in collaboration with UN Agencies based in Addis Ababa, developed the African Union Comprehensive Socio-Economic and Environmental Response to the Covid-19 Health Pandemic (Caring for Human Security). On promoting a human security approach for sustainable governance response to the COVID-19 Pandemic in Africa, the common Response is developed with the objective to guide Member States and Regional Economic Communities (REC) in their efforts to design responses strategies to the pandemic in the field of social development, labour and employment. It is grounded on the pillars of the AU Social Agenda 2063, which is the blueprint policy framework of the STC.

“The Social Agenda 2063 could not have been adopted at a more appropriate time with the advent of the COVID-19 crisis. It provides a framework for a response, as well as direction and focus on short, medium and long term strategic actions and investments required to mitigate the socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Political background:

Following recommendations of the 3rd Ordinary Session of the STC-SDLE, the AU Executive Council (Niamey, Niger, June-July 2019) adopted the following policy frameworks:

1. The AU Social Agenda 2063
2. the AUC-ILO Joint Programme on Decent Work for the Transformation of the Informal Economy (2020-2024)
3. The Ten Year Action Plan on Eradication of Child Labour, Forced Labour, Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery in Africa (2020-2030): AGENDA 2063-SDG TARGET 8.7
4. AUC-ILO-IOM-AUC Joint Labour Migration Programme (JLMP)
5. The Plan of Action on Ending Attacks and Discrimination against People with Albinism
6. Five Year strategies for the AU Campaign to End Child Marriage and FGM including a clear accountability framework
7. OCSE Plan of Action and framework
8. Modelling for Demand driven Labour Market Information Systems (LMIS)
9. AU Disability Strategic Framework

The STC on Social Development, Labour and Employment also recommended the setting up Sub-committees and ad hoc working groups, modalities which will be considered during this session of the STC for a continental tripartite dialogue on labour migration in the form of the Colombo Process, and working groups on child labour eradication.

The STC being held once every two years, leaves a space for technical meetings at experts' level, both for implementation of the key decisions and follow-up on the implementation, working in close collaboration with the AUC Department of Social Affairs. It is in this spirit that the Sub-Committees, Ad hoc working groups and other mechanisms will operate. They allow for effective engagement and commitment of Member States in the continental processes and enhance ownership. They will feed into the STC sessions through reporting for recommendations and decisions.

Sectoral Meetings

The 4th Meeting of the STC SDLE will break into Sectoral Meetings to consider agenda businesses for Social Development and Labour and employment respectively.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STC-SDLE-4

The overall objective of the STC-SDLE is to consider and adopt strategies and policy measures at regional and continental levels to enhance. These key documents are developed to create resilience of the society, economies and the labour market in the continent against the socioeconomic adverse impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The policies are geared towards social development through empowering the vulnerable and marginalized groups to improve their capacity to generate opportunities for livelihood.

The STC will also consider a concrete roadmap in line with the strategies of the Harmful practices portfolio, including the AU Campaign to End Child Marriage and the Saleema Initiative to eliminate female genital mutilation, providing clear recommendations on reducing the different levels of vulnerabilities that young girls and women are exposed to including in humanitarian, emergency and conflict settings

IV. AGENDA AND DOCUMENTATION

The STC-SDLE-4 will deliberate on the following agenda items at the level of Sectorial Meetings:

- i)** Ouaga+10 Post-COVID-19 Priority Plan
- ii)** TORs for the Rapporteur on Child Labour, Forced Labour, Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery
- iii)** Report of the Meeting of the Social Security Institutions, and adoption of the proposal on continental coordination and cooperation mechanism (mandate, composition, organization, functioning, etc)
- iv)** Report of the AU Labour Migration Advisory Committee
- v)** The draft Declaration on the Protection of Migrant Workers and Draft Bilateral Labour Migration Arrangement (BLA)
- vi)** Briefing on the Payment of Former ARI Staff Salary Arrears
- vii)** Submission of the Draft Revised AU Framework and Plan of Action on Ageing
- viii)** Briefing on the Signing and Ratification of the Protocols on Older Persons and Persons with Disabilities in Africa
- ix)** Briefing on the Appointment of a Special Envoy on Albinism
- x)** Update on the Adoption of the Draft Protocol on Social Protection and Social Security
- xi)** Briefing on the Implementation of the AU Disability Strategic Framework and the AU Plan of Action and Policy Framework on Ageing
- xii)** Submission of the Draft Implementation Strategy on the Plan of Action to End Attacks and Other Human Rights Violations Targeting Persons with Albinism in Africa
- xiii)** Strategic Plans for the AU Campaign to End Child Marriage and the AU Saleema Initiative on the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation respectively

- xiv) AU Harmful Practices Accountability Framework
- xv) OCSE Plan of Action and framework

V. FORMAT OF THE STC-SDLE - 4

The meeting will be organized in two phases:

a) Experts Meeting: 04-06 April 2022

During the first three days (04-06 April 2022) of the Meeting, experts/officials from Member States will consider relevant documents and expert panellists' views and make appropriate recommendations for the Ministers' consideration and approval.

b) Ministers Meeting 07-08 April 2022

The Ministers will consider the Report of the Experts' Meeting and endorse the Draft policy frameworks and guidelines in its agenda.

VI. PARTICIPANTS

The Fourth Specialized Technical Committee Meeting on Social Development, Labour and Employment (STC –SDLE-4) will bring together Ministers in-charge of Social Development, Labour and Employment, Government Experts responsible for the concerned sectors, the social partners, Regional Economic Communities, and organizations with observer status r such as the Pan African Productivity Association, OATUU, OECD and International Organizations, including UN agencies, working in the areas of concern will also be invited.

VII. DATE AND VENUE

The STC–SDLE-4 will convene from **04-08 April 2022 in fully virtual format.**

VIII. LANGUAGES

Simultaneous interpretation will be provided in the four (4) working languages of the African Union: Arabic, English, French and Portuguese.

IX. DOCUMENTATION

The main working documents of the STC-SDLE-4 will be available on the AU Website: www.au.int