

## INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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### **Ministerial session of the fourth Ordinary Session of the Specialized Technical Committee (STC) on Social Development, Labour and Employment kicks off**



The Ministerial segment of the Fourth Ordinary Session of the Specialized Technical Committee (STC) on Social Development, Labour and Employment opened at the AUC Headquarters with a view to exploring opportunities and addressing the challenges facing the continent due to the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 pandemic.

Speaking during the opening ceremony, H.E. Minata Samate Cessouma, the Commissioner of Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development, reflected on the theme of the STC “Building forward Better Well Being and Living Standards in Africa”, saying that it speaks directly to the African Union Theme of the Year, “Strengthening Resilience in Nutrition and Food Security on the African Continent: Strengthening Agro-Food Systems, Health and Social Protection Systems for the Acceleration of Human, Social and Economic Capital Development”.

H.E. Cessouma said that this meeting is taking place against the backdrop of emerging from the detrimental ravages of COVID-19 on Africa economies. 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 incoming Chair of the STC Bureau Hon. Amongi Betty Ongom, Minister for Gender, Labour and Social Development in her opening remarks urged on the need of pushing harder for the domains of Social Development, Labour and Employment to build resilience through constructing cushioning mechanisms, as African economies were harshly bruised by economic substantial downsizing. In addition, she said that there will be significant job losses in Africa’s large informal economy as well as in specific sectors like tourism and travel, hotel and hospitality due to inherent fragility.

In her words, Ms. Cynthia Samuel-Olonjuwon, ILO Assistant Director-General and Regional Director for Africa highlighted some of the AU-ILO initiatives relating to social protection, child labour, fair recruitment, labour migration governance which have been captured in the recently signed the AU/ILO agreement. ILO is part of the implementing partners of the Joint Labour Migration Programme (JLMP) alongside AU, UNECA and IOM. “The JLMP collaboration has permitted the development of African Union guidelines on Bilateral Labour Agreements (BLAs) to firm up the protection of migrant workers from Africa and the AU Declaration on the protection and promotion of the rights of migrant workers. Another area of success through

our collaboration is the improvement of labour migration data collection, analysis and dissemination including through the production of three editions of the Report on Labour Migration Statistics in Africa” Ms. Cynthia said.

On his remarks, Mr. MEZHOUD Arezki, General Secretary of the Organisation of African Trade Union Unity (OATUU) highlighted that the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted human, economic and social sectors. He urged AU Member States to give priority to strengthening social services sector, such as health, education and social protection among their development priorities, and adopt policies based on social justice and combating disparities. He recommended effective and comprehensive implementation of the policies and tools which have been presented and endorsed by this STC.

Mrs. Jacqueline Mugo, Secretary General of Business Africa Employers Confederation underscored that the COVID-19 pandemic has reversed a number of gains African Member States had registered in the various social indicators. She recommended that the STC should make decisions that will not just return Africa to pre-pandemic levels but also unleash the prosperity of Africa. “At Business Africa we desire to see a stronger role for the Social Partners in win-win for all parties Employers, Member States and Workers”, she added.

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.

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