



United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

Republic of Malawi

PRESS RELEASE

Industrialization, Manufacturing and Regional Value-Chains top the agenda at the twenty-seventh Session of the ICSOE being hosted by Malawi

Blantyre, Malawi 11 October 2021 – The Twenty-Seventh Session of the Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts (ICSOE) for Southern Africa on the theme, **“Building back better from COVID-19 in Southern Africa: Fostering commodity-based industrialization, manufacturing and regional value-chains”**, begins on **Wednesday 13th October 2021** with key note addresses by **Honourable Felix Lafiel Mlusu**, Minister of Finance of Malawi; Honourable Thabo Sofonea, Minister of Finance of the Kingdom of Lesotho, Chairperson of the 26th ICSOE; Ms. Chileshe Kapwepwe, COMESA Executive Secretary; Mr. Elias Mpedi Magosi, SADC Executive Secretary; Ambassador David Claude Pierre, Permanent Representative of the AU Southern Africa Regional Office (AU-SARO) and Ms. Vera Songwe, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa.

ICSOE is a United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) policy sub-organ of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development. The Committee was established to provide a forum for engaging senior officials and experts of member States on policy and programme-related matters in each of the five sub-regions of Africa – Central, Eastern, North, Southern and West. The ICSOE is thus an integral part of ECA’s governance machinery and meets annually to consider, provide guidance and endorse the formulation and implementation of the programmes of work of the Commission’s Sub-Regional Offices (SROs) in line with the priorities of each sub-region. In this connection, the Committees proffer recommendations with a view to ensuring that the development imperatives of each sub-region are fully incorporated into the Commission’s overall work programme.

The ICSOE is guided by a Bureau, comprising a chair, vice chair and a rapporteur, elected at each session, and serving until the next meeting. As the executive arm of the Committee, the Bureau works closely with the Secretariat in delivering on the programmed work, and the implementation of the ICSOE recommendations. The ECA SRO-SA based in Lusaka, Zambia is one of the five ECA SROs, and serves eleven member States, namely, Angola, Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The Committee’s current ICSOE Bureau elected at its twenty-sixth Session hosted virtually by the Kingdom of Lesotho in October 2020 comprises the Kingdom of Lesotho as chair, Malawi as vice chair and South Africa as rapporteur.

The meeting brings together senior Government Officials in industrialization, regional integration, trade and private sector including Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) from member States, as well as representatives of Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) and

Common Markets for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) Secretariats. Representatives from Civil Society Organisations, academic and research institutions, professional organisations, the UN family and other ECA entities are participating in the meeting.

Specifically, the twenty-seventh Session will focus on the reasons behind the persistent reliance on primary commodity exports and lack of manufacturing development in the sub-region; the lack of progress in addressing critical constraints to inclusive industrialization and regional value chains; the implications of Covid-19 on inclusive industrialization, manufacturing and regional value chain development in Southern Africa; emerging opportunities for industrial and private sector development in Southern Africa with attention to the potential to leveraging green, blue and digital economies; the implications of the AfCFTA on regional and national industrialization strategies and cross-border cooperation in industrial and manufacturing development including how to position and market “Made in Africa” and foster regional intra-industry trade; as well as ways of leveraging the opportunities presented by the AfCFTA to boost agricultural value chains and economic transformation in Southern Africa.

Building on the observations and proposals of the twenty-sixth ICSOE, this session is expected to proffer well-informed set of policy recommendations with a clear implementation path on commodity-based industrialization, manufacturing and value chain development including agriculture value chains, linkages and transformation in Southern Africa.

This Inter-governmental committee meeting will be preceded by an Ad-hoc Expert Group Meeting to be held on 12th October 2021 on the theme: **Agriculture value chains, linkages and transformation in Southern Africa: Opportunities from the African Continental Free Trade Area**. The main objective of the meeting is to provide a platform for experts to deliberate on two draft study reports prepared by the consultants to gather comments, inputs and recommendations that will inform the finalization of the reports, and ensure their relevance to policymakers and other relevant stakeholders in Southern Africa in the context of building back better post-COVID-19. The recommendations are to be tabled at the ICSOE for consideration and adoption by the Committee.

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