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**Economic Commission for Africa**  
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Online, 17 and 18 November 2021Item 6 (a) of the provisional agenda\*  
**General discussion on the theme of the fourth session**  
**“Building forward better towards an inclusive and resilient future in the context of COVID-19”****4<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON  
POVERTY, SOCIAL POLICY AND GENDER  
(CSPPG)****BUILDING FORWARD BETTER TOWARDS AN  
INCLUSIVE AND RESILIENT FUTURE\*\*****Issues Paper****Key Messages**

(a) COVID – 19 exposed and further compounded the prevalence and persistence of poverty in Africa. An additional 55 million persons fell into extreme poverty due to the pandemic. This will bring the total number of people in extreme poverty in Africa to 514 million, that is, approximately 40% of the continent’s population.

(b) For the majority of African countries, growth is neither pro-poor nor inclusive. A significant share of African population is susceptible to enter into extreme poverty of US\$1.90 per day since a large share of the population in all the regions is in poverty threshold of \$1.90 - \$3.20 per day, that is, North Africa (14.4 per cent), West Africa (26.9 per cent), Central Africa (19.6 per cent), East Africa (20.6 per cent) and Southern Africa (19.1 per cent).

(c) Underlying structural vulnerabilities in African economic growth models exacerbate vulnerability to shocks such as COVID-19. A heavy reliance of the extractive sector in driving both the economy and exports which have limited capacity to create decent jobs and also suffers from the price volatility. The intensity of the impact of COVID-19 on Africa is strongly associated with the fact that 85.8% of total employment on the continent, the largest share of any world region, is in the informal sector.

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(d) As part of building future resilience for all, there is need for policies targeted at fostering productivity and job creation addressing also specific needs of women and youth. Economic diversification and a movement toward higher productivity sectors to boost productive jobs is a necessary foundation for building resilience and shielding a country from external shocks, and ultimately fuel economic growth that reduced poverty, inequality and vulnerability.

(e) There are opportunities that Africa can leverage for recovery and building forward for an inclusive and resilient future. Rapid and ambitious implementation of AfCFTA and related digital solutions for instance offer such means to expedite speed economic recovery, aid promotion of job-rich growth, and build resilience for future global shocks. Africa's growing rapid urbanization also offers vast opportunities to enable regional trade integration and economic development if it is well planned and managed.

## 1. Introduction

COVID-19 pandemic has had devastating impacts in Africa. It has caused African economies to enter recession for the first time in 30 years, eroded its fiscal space further, increased debt, threatened livelihoods, and exacerbated inequalities and poverty levels especially among the informally employed as well as young girls and women. In order to build better forward towards an inclusive and resilient future in Africa, job rich growth is essential.

Despite the challenges associated with the pandemic, there are opportunities for African countries to build resilience and build forward better including through the AfCFTA and the fourth industrial revolution. Although intra-regional trade, at 15%, being the lowest in Africa, the continent can build on digital solutions to boost trade in job rich growth sectors which inter alia include tourism, manufacturing sector especially agro-processing, textiles, transport equipment and leather to build forward better.

Using evidence from Africa, this paper surveys the social and economic impacts of COVID-19. It argues that these effects were exacerbated partly by the fact that Africa's growth is insufficiently inclusive and resilient underpinned by structural vulnerabilities. It proposes that building an inclusive and resilient future through productive jobs is a necessary foundation for an inclusive and resilient future.

## 2. The Impact of COVID-19 in Africa

This section discusses the impact of COVID-19 on Africa by focusing on health, education, employment, poverty and inequality, economic growth and financial flows.

### 2.1 The Impact of COVID-19 on Health

As of 8 November 2021, the continent had registered 6.18 million confirmed cases (2.4 per cent of the world total), 151.5 thousand deaths (3 per cent of the world total) with 52 countries rolling out COVID-19 vaccines by the time (WHO, 2021). With Africa having low ratios of health professionals and hospital beds and most of its stock of pharmaceuticals being imported, health systems are highly constrained in their response to COVID-19.

Also, more than 90% of the COVID-19 cases globally occurred in cities, and urban areas have faced severe impacts and constraints due to the pandemic (United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), 2020). **The COVID-19 risk factors are acute in African cities in part due to the largely unplanned and poorly managed urbanization process resulting in widespread informal settlements and severe infrastructure and service deficits.** In 2019, about 47% of Africa's urban population lived in slums or informal settlements, which translates into about 257 million people across the whole of Africa (UN-Habitat, 2020). Inhabitants of slums and informal

settlements face heightened challenges in accessing healthcare services and products.

## 2.2 The Impact of COVID – 19 on Education

With the advent of COVID – 19 pandemic, African countries witnessed massive disruption of the education system which has negative impact on the future productivity of the labour force. For the majority of the African countries most schools faces serious shortfall in adequate remote learning opportunities and the digital divide (World Bank, 2021; United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), 2021; United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), 2021). The digital divide across the African continent is characterised by lack of electricity access, absence of internet, smartphones and computers especially in the rural areas (World Bank, 2021; UNESCO, 2021 and UNICEF, 2021).

To be specific, in 2019, in 29 African countries, less than 10% of households owned a computer, while in 43 African countries, less than half of all households had internet access (World Bank, 2021; UNESCO, 2021 and UNICEF, 2021). Additional information from UNESCO and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) shows that 89% of learners in Africa excluding North Africa do not have access to household computers, 82% lack internet access and at least 20 million live in areas not covered by a mobile network. In comparison with other regions, at only around 6%, the share of students from pre-primary to upper secondary school that can be reached online for learning is the lowest in Africa excluding North Africa. The most students are potentially being reached via radio.

The COVID-19 pandemic is threatening to worsen gender inequalities in education. Based on observations noted under digital divide, the pandemic has negative consequences for girls in the rural areas especially those of lower socioeconomic status or with disabilities (UNICEF, 2021). UNICEF (2021) and UNESCO (2021) underscored that girls are at higher risk of dropout and less likely to benefit from remote learning.

Being out of school as a result of COVID-19 could negatively impact girls’ socialisation and access to sexual and reproductive health services as well as safe spaces. Consequently, girls could become more prone to sexual violence and exploitation, female genital mutilation (FGM), forced marriage and early pregnancies. UNICEF (2021) and UNESCO (2021) estimates shows that about one million girls in sub-Saharan Africa may never return to school due to becoming pregnant during COVID-19 school closures.

## 2.3 The Impact of COVID – 19 on Employment

The intensity of the impact of COVID-19 on the labour force in Africa is mainly caused by the fact that 85.8% of total employment on the continent, the largest share of any world region, is in the informal sector (ILO, 2021). Because of lockdowns and associated restriction measures, the majority of employees in the informal sector lost 7.7% of their income and some have fallen into poverty since they are not covered by social protection mechanisms or unemployment insurance (ILO, 2021). In cities also, where the majority are informally employed, there have been significant job losses. Urban based enterprises and sectors have also undergone drastic reductions and closures especially SMEs which have a constrained ability to absorb shocks.

Since most women are informally employed other challenges include elevated risks of eviction and homelessness, food insecurity and information inequalities especially among women. Furthermore, a survey on the impact of COVID-19 on women entrepreneurs by OECD (2021) shows that 38.5% of the women interviewed reported that their businesses shut down as a result of the restrictions measures which were instituted. Of the 43.8% of the women’s business which closed shop reported to have slipped into poverty due to loss of

income (OECD, 2021). Also, the lockdown measures disproportionately hit sectors where women represent a larger share of the workforce such as hospitality (MIF, 2021).

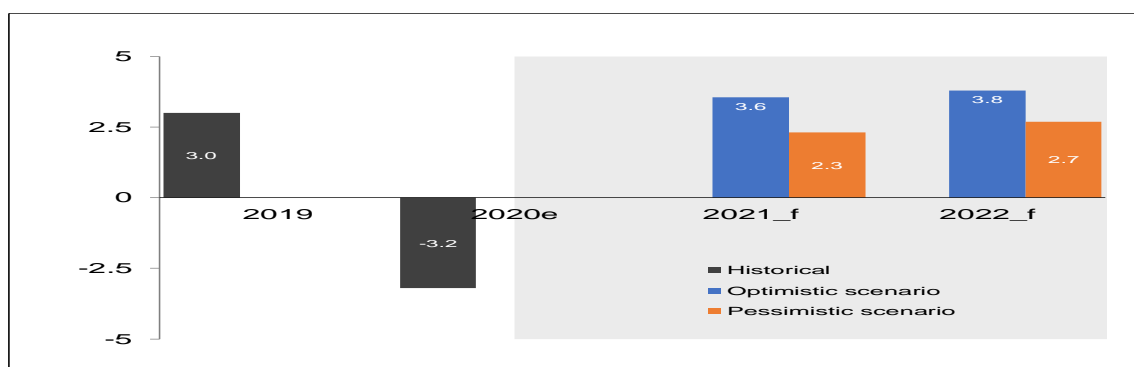
In addition, marginalised youth groups which inter alia include young Africans living with disabilities, refugees or displaced youth have encountered specific challenges because of COVID-19 as well as the existing obstacles that deny them access to decent jobs.

## 2.4 The Impact of COVID – 19 on Economic Growth

For the first time in 30 years, Africa entered into a recession as the continent’s real gross product (GDP) declined by 1.9% (International Monetary Fund (IMF), 2021a). The continent’s real gross domestic product (GDP) is estimated to have contracted by 3.2 per cent in 2020 due to the health and economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic which have led to significant contractions in industry and services sectors as well as declines in investment and consumption.

Real GDP is projected to rebound up to 3.6 per cent in 2021 and 3.8 percent in 2022, with the 2021 growth revised 0.6 percentage point relative to the December 2020 fourth Quarter estimates (Figure 2). Higher commodity prices, increasing global demand, agriculture sector growth and the partial recovery in the labour market are expected to drive growth in the short- to medium-term.

Figure 2  
GDP growth in Africa, 2018 -2022



Source: Based on ECA estimates, 2021.

In 2021, although Africa is expected to grow by +3.6%, the GDP is still projected to fall more than \$150 billion short of pre-pandemic projections (IMF, 2021a). The rebound is also backed by the gradual acceleration of economic activities in most affected sectors as observed in the latter half of 2020 due to the progressive easing of restriction measures and the massive fiscal and monetary stimulus packages put in place. This fiscal and monetary support is expected to underpin economic activity in 2021, boosting aggregate demand and reducing unemployment on the continent. However, **on a country level, because of the severity of the pandemic, some fragile countries such as Algeria, Libya and Zambia may take up to seven or more years to reach pre-COVID-19 GDP levels (IMF, 2021a).**

The impacts of COVID-19 on local economies and finance has also been severe. As first responders in tackling the urban impacts of COVID-19, local authorities are key actors in taking measures to tackle the crisis, yet many face capacity constraints including a loss of up to 60% of their revenues (UN-Habitat, 2020).

## 2.5 The Impact of COVID – 19 on Financial Flows

With respect to the impact of the pandemic on foreign direct investments and remittances, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

(UNCTAD) (2021) noted that the pandemic accelerates pre-existing decline in FDI and reduces remittances flows to a trickle. To be specific, the UNCTAD (2021) observed that following an already concerning decline of -10.3% in 2019, FDI could fall by a further -25% to -40%.

Traditionally, diaspora remittances represent the largest and most stable inflows to the continent, accounting for about one-third of total inflows in 2019 (World Bank, 2021). This has helped in building resilience in African communities. However, because of the lockdown measures instituted in the source countries, World Bank (2021) anticipated a -23.1% decline in remittances in 2020 thereby posing serious repercussions on income, spending power and foreign exchange reserves.

As a result of the pandemic, decline in economic growth coupled with fall in FDI and remittances exacerbates unemployment, poverty, inequalities and food insecurity in the African continent (MIF, 2021).

## 2.6 The Impact of COVID-19 on Poverty and Inequality

The COVID – 19 pandemic has exposed and further compounded the prevalence and persistence of poverty in Africa. An additional 55 million persons fell into extreme poverty due to the pandemic. The rise on the extreme poverty in 2020 is for the first time in 20 years (World Bank, 2021). If this happens, this will bring the total number of people in extreme poverty in Africa to 514 million, that is, approximately 40% of the continent's population (UNECA, 2021). Between 2021 and 2030, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the UN Women (2020) estimated that the number of women and girls living in extremely poor households is anticipated to increase from 249 million to 283 million.

Because COVID – 19 resulted in serious disruption of supply chains, the food insecurity situation in Africa has been worsened since the is net food importer. As such, agricultural production in Africa excluding North Africa expected to contract between -2.6% and -7.0% due to the pandemic (IMF, 2021). Furthermore, it reduced the purchasing power of vulnerable households at a time of surging food prices and limited market access due to lockdown policies. At a global glance, between March 2020 and March 2021, global food prices rose by +26.0% and have risen continually since July 2020 (IMF, 2021). Resultantly, over 100 million Africans faced emergency or catastrophic levels of food insecurity in 2020, that is, an increase of +60% from 2019. Because food insecurity is directly correlated with poverty, the worsening food insecurity coupled with steep food price increases, an additional 70 – 88 million Africans are anticipated to slide into extreme poverty between 2020 and 2021 (African Development Bank, 2021; World Bank, 2021 and United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), 2021).

The intensity of the impact of COVID-19 on Africa is strongly associated with the fact that 85.8% of total employment on the continent, the largest share of any world region, is in the informal sector (ILO, 2021b). Because of lockdowns and associated restriction measures, the majority of employees in the informal sector lost 7.7% of their income and some have fallen into poverty since they are not covered by social protection mechanisms or unemployment insurance (ILO, 2021b). The severity of poverty and inequality is worsened by the fact that growth in Africa is not inclusive as highlighted below.

## 3. The Quality of Growth in Africa: underlying structural vulnerabilities

### (a) Is Africa's Growth Inclusive?

Inclusive growth is about the extent of benefits that participants derive from participating in the growth (i.e., inclusive growth is inclusive of outcomes). This focus on *outcomes* necessarily shifts the focus on the distribution of the fruits of the growth process, that is, whether the growth process is pro-poor in

the sense that it enables the poor become less poor, both in the absolute sense (declining poverty), and relative to other groups (declining inequality) (ECA, 2020)

The aspects of inclusive growth is highlighted by Sustainable Development Goal 8 which envisages to “*promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all*”. The importance of this goal is centred on the fact that creating decent work, strengthening employment and income generating programmes is *priori* and sufficient requirement for poverty eradication and inclusive growth.

In principle, inclusive growth can be analysed both in absolute and relative terms. In absolute terms, growth is inclusive if it increases the mean consumption of the poor (pro-poor growth), regardless of the average growth of the entire population (African Development Bank, 2020). **In relative terms, inclusive growth, that is pro-poor and inclusive growth, occurs when mean consumption of the poor increases more proportionately than the overall consumption in a country (African Development Bank, 2020).**

**In this context, evidence shows that, between 2000-05 and 2010-16, on average, the consumption of Africa’s poor grew at a slower rate than the average population growth (African Development Bank, 2020).** To be specific, the pro-poor growth rate reached only 3.04 percent while the average per capita consumption on the continent has been growing at 3.32 percent a year over the two subperiods (African Development Bank, 2020). Hence, between 2000 and 2016, although poor populations have benefited from the continent’s unprecedented economic growth, their consumption growth has not been fast enough to help them catch up with the average or richer segments of the populations. **Evidence shows that living standards of rich households increased much faster than those of poor household: consumption of the richest 20 percent grew by 3.5 percent a year, compared with 2.9 per cent for the poorest 20 percent population (African Development Bank, 2020).**

At a continental level, although not consistent, growth in only 18 of the 48 countries such as Côte d’Ivoire, Djibouti, Togo, Ghana, Liberia, Madagascar, and Niger registered inclusive growth with data showing faster average consumption for the poor and lower inequality between different population segments (African Development Bank, 2020) (see table 1).

Evidence shows that Benin and Zambia, between 2000-05 and 2010-17 periods, growth was neither inclusive nor pro-poor, while during the same period, Egypt was the only country with a pro-poor but non-inclusive growth (see table 1) (African Development Bank, 2020).

Table 1  
Countries with Improved Inclusiveness in their Growth

Subperiod 2 (2005-10 and 2010 – 17)				
Sub Period 1 (2000 – 05 and 2005-10)		Neither pro-poor nor inclusive growth	Pro-poor but non-inclusive growth	Pro-poor and inclusive growth
	Neither pro-poor nor inclusive growth	Benin, Zambia	Cameroon, Ethiopia	Côte d’Ivoire, Djibouti, Togo
	Pro-poor but non-inclusive growth	Senegal, South Africa	Egypt	Morocco, Tanzania, Tunisia
	Pro-poor and inclusive growth	Ghana, Liberia, Madagascar, Niger	Mozambique, Namibia	Botswana, Burkina Faso, Gambia, Mali, Mauritania, Rwanda, Uganda

Source: African Development Bank (2020).

**Between 2000-05 and 2010-17, only seven countries, that is, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Gambia, Mali, Mauritania, Rwanda and Uganda registered**

**both pro-poor and inclusive growth (see table 2.1) (African Development Bank, 2020).**

In these countries, the average rate of pro-poor growth reached 3.6 percent per annum against 1.5 percent for the average population, inducing reductions in both poverty (0.7 percent a year) and inequality (0.5 percent a year) (African Development Bank, 2020) (see table 2).

Table 2  
**Poverty, Inequality and Inclusiveness (2000 – 2017)**

Description	Number of Countries	Mean consumption growth rate (%)	Rate of pro-poor growth (%)	Annualised poverty growth (%)	Annualised Gini growth (%)
Pro-poor but non-inclusive growth	22	2.69	0.73	-0.84	0.82
Pro-poor and inclusive growth	18	1.50	3.64	-0.70	-0.49
Neither pro-poor nor inclusive growth	8	-1.49	-0.03	0.02	-0.01
<b>Average Total</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>2.01</b>	<b>1.82</b>	<b>-1.46</b>	<b>0.05</b>

Source: African Development Bank (2020) and World Bank (2020).

This suggests that, despite faster growth for most countries since 2000, increases in the living standards of poor populations in most countries have not significantly reduced the consumption gap between rich and poor (African Development Bank, 2020).

**Resultantly, 65.8 per cent, that is, nearly two thirds of Africa's economically vulnerable population, that is, lives in poverty or exposed to poverty live Nigeria, Ethiopia, Egypt, United Republic of Tanzania, Kenya, Sudan, Uganda, Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Africa and Niger (UNECA, 2020) (see table 3). UNECA (2020) estimates shows that 567 million people is within the range of the mean consumption level of \$1.90–\$5.20 per day (see table 3).**

Table 3  
**Ten Countries with Most Vulnerable Population in Africa**

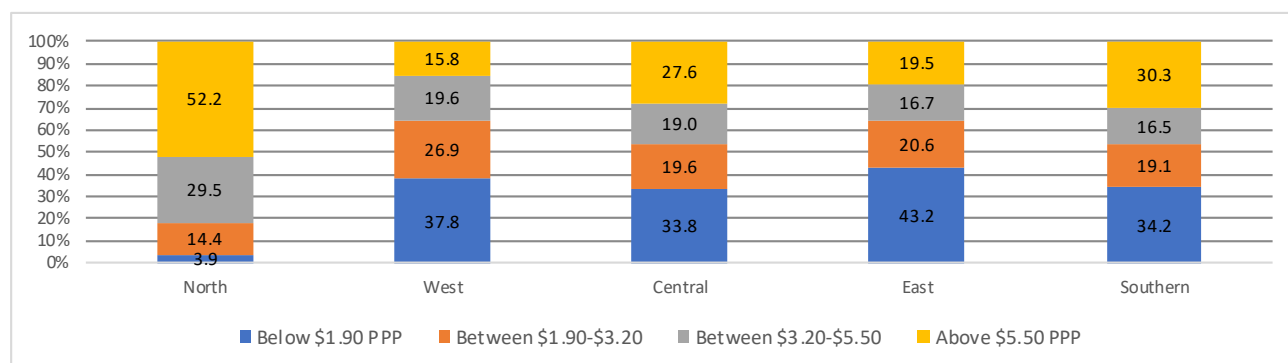
Country	Total vulnerable population (million)	Percentage of the Country's total population	Percentage of Africa's total vulnerable populations
Egypt	68.359	66.8	12.1
Sudan	29.510	68.9	5.2
Niger	11.740	50.4	2.1
Nigeria	79.364	39.5	14.0
Democratic Republic of the Congo	19.166	22.1	3.4
Ethiopia	68.059	60.7	12.0
Kenya	26.993	51.3	4.8
Uganda	21.178	47.8	3.7
United Republic of Tanzania	25.626	44.1	4.5
South Africa	22.597	38.6	4.0
<b>Total for Africa</b>	<b>567.067</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>65.8</b>

Source: ECA calculations.

Amongst the 10 countries, Nigeria, Egypt and Ethiopia have the highest number of people in vulnerability which constitute 39.5 per cent (79.364 million), 66.8 per cent (68.359 million) and 60.7 per cent (68.059 million) of the respective countries' total population (see table 3).

From a regional perspective, in Africa, 43.2 per cent of the population of East Africa lives in extreme poverty, that is, less than \$1.90 per day whilst the population in extreme poverty in other regions is 37.8 per cent, 34.2 per cent, 33.8 per cent and 3.9 per cent for West Africa, Southern Africa, Central Africa and North Africa, respectively (see figure 3).

Figure 3  
**Distribution of Population by Mean Consumption Category Across Sub-Regions (as a per cent)**



*Source:* ECA calculations using data from the World Development Indicators database (World Bank, 2020).

To make matters worse, a significant share of African population is susceptible to enter into extreme poverty of US\$1.90 per day since a large share of the population in all the regions is in poverty threshold of \$1.90 - \$3.20 per day, that is, North Africa (14.4 per cent), West Africa (26.9 per cent), Central Africa (19.6 per cent), East Africa (20.6 per cent) and Southern Africa (19.1 per cent) (see figure 3) (UNECA, 2020). This is particularly so because most of these households, as is the case with the continent, draws their livelihood from the informal sector with limited access to suitable coping mechanisms thereby increasing the probability of an individual or household to be pushed below the extreme poverty threshold of \$1.90 per person per day.

**The preceding section shows that it is evident that for the majority of African countries, growth is neither pro-poor nor inclusive except for Botswana, Burkina Faso, Gambia, Mali, Mauritania, Rwanda and Uganda.**

The main root causes of the entrenched poverty and inequality and insufficiently inclusive growth is centred around a heavy reliance of the extractive sector in driving both the economy and exports which have limited capacity to create decent jobs and also suffers from the price volatility (UNECA, 2020).

**(b) Underlying Structural Vulnerabilities in Africa**

African growth model which is characterised by heavy reliance on primary commodities and the extractive sector have been exposed by the pandemic. From a trade perspective, the trade structure of African economies is overly dependent on external demand and supply. As noted by UNCTAD (2021), 76.7% of Africa's exports is made up of primary commodities such as minerals, crude oil and agricultural commodities making economies vulnerable to price fluctuations.

For instance, a review of the price volatility of the oil industry shows that countries which rely on a single product face serious structural vulnerabilities and are very fragile in times of exogenous shocks caused by disasters like the COVID – 19 pandemic. The COVID – 19 pandemic contributed to a sharp fall in demand of crude oil by one third of its typical level. In the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), which include 7 African countries,



witnessed price per barrel falling by over 50%, hitting all – time lows of US\$12.22 per barrel on 22 April 2020 (OPEC, 2021). This caused serious repercussions for oil producing countries in Africa. For example, Nigeria, which is one of the continent’s top exporter, crude oil exports account for more than 50% of the government revenues and more than 90% of foreign exchange (OPEC, 2021). Likewise, trade data between 2014 and 2018 shows that crude oil exports account for 90% of government revenues in Angola and 73% in South Sudan while hydrocarbons accounted for 96% of the budget in Libya (OPEC, 2021).

Another example is the tourism sector, which in 2018 and 2019, the tourism sector contributed to over 10% of total exports in 18 African countries (World Bank, 2021). As a result of the pandemic, international tourist arrivals in Africa in 2020 went down by 70% as source countries instituted lockdowns. This resulted in tourist dependent economies contracting by more than 11.5% (World Bank, 2021). Most affected countries are Mauritian economy which estimated to have contracted by 15% followed by Seychelles (-12%) and Cabo Verde (-8.9%).

In view of these grim projections, ECA calls for the need to urgently reinforce the building of strong, resilient, and diversified economies to ensure that Africa fulfils its potential of shared prosperity. In addition, as part of the process aimed at building resilience, there is need for policies targeted at fostering productivity and job creation.

#### **4. Job Rich Growth for Inclusion and Resilience**

Africa’s economies have not been creating sufficient decent and productive jobs even when growing at relatively higher GDP growth rates. While 18 million are needed to absorb new entrants into the labour market, sub-Saharan Africa is only creating three million jobs annually (ILO 2020). As mentioned above, this is in many ways related to insufficient economic diversification. Economic diversification which is accompanied by industrial upgrading due to technology diffusion and a movement toward higher productivity sectors and better paying jobs is a panacea to building resilience and shielding a country from external shocks such as price shocks and pandemics like COVID-19. Beyond protection against shocks, economic diversification to boost productive jobs is increasingly recognized as essential for economic development, especially in low-income and resource-dependent countries, as it can help fuel economic growth and poverty reduction (Ramey and Ramey, 1995).

A major opportunity in Africa to build resilience and job rich growth is the AfCFTA. In order to achieve expedite speed economic recovery, aid promotion of job-rich growth, and build resilience for future global shocks, there is need for rapid and ambitious implementation of AfCFTA (UNECA, 2020d). IMF modeling suggests that 60 per cent of the total increase in income from AfCFTA will come from higher manufacturing output particularly in apparel, textiles, agro-processing, vehicles and transport equipment, wood and paper, leather and electronics which is key in creating jobs (Abrego et al., 2019; AU & UNECA, 2020).

In addition, in the context of COVID-19 response, and in order to drive regional integration, ECA argues for use of digital trade solutions. In line with existing experience witnessed in EAC, other RECs in Africa may need to consider implementing several digital solutions which inter alia include electronic versions of proof of compliance, contactless border control, mobile money payment options and electronic cargo tracking (UNECA, 2020d).

In building better forward towards an inclusive and resilient future, the following policy priorities are key:

- In view of sharp declines in income, in order to mitigate the crisis and sustain access to services and food security, support to poor and vulnerable households is essential. In the course of the pandemic, as part of safety nets there is need for African governments to provide social assistance programmes has been to cast the net wide, to avoid excluding any of those in need.
- In order for African economies to effectively participate in the knowledge economy, fourth industrial revolution (4IR) and benefit from the African Continental Free Trade Agreement, which provide a large market access for the continent, there is need to build skills in STEM and information and communication technology (ICT).
- However, in doing this, there is need for African countries to address the digital middle layer (or middleware) between infrastructure hardware and policy which is missing: lack of payment services, digital identification and digital skills in workforce.
- As part of the strategy to build an inclusive and resilient continent, African countries may need to place emphasis on the role of cities in regional trade integration and economic development in the region. Cities are “drivers of development” and contributes to productive jobs and economic diversification across the continent if they are supported by appropriate policy frameworks tailored to the diversity of African economies.
- Deepen structural reforms aimed at diversifying Africa’s productive base and reviving growth need to be implemented with a view to radically diversify the continent’s economic base away from primary commodities to manufactured commodities which are not susceptible to price volatility.

On its part, building on previous experience on health pandemics in the continent such as Ebola, ECA is collaborating with the African Union, regional institutions, development partners and African governments to fight the pandemic (UNECA, 2021). In this regard, the ECA is supporting countries with a cutting edge policy advisory and resource mobilisation since most African countries are facing tight fiscal space (UNECA, 2021).

## **5. Policy Issues and Key Questions**

The following topics are to be considered for discussion:

- (a) What policy measures should member states undertake to eradicate extreme and reduce inequality?
- (b) Using the job rich growth sectors such as manufacturing, tourism, textile and clothing, leather industries and agro-processing, what policies and strategies can be used by African governments to reduce the level of informality and unlock the untapped growth potential?
- (c) What strategies and policy priorities should member States embrace to use cities as vehicles for fostering job creation, access to health and women empowerment?
- (d) How can the AfCFTA be used as a vehicle for fostering productive jobs in Africa?
- (e) What structural reforms can be used by Africa to diversify its productive base away from primary commodities to manufactured commodities which are not susceptible to price volatility?
- (f) How can the digital technologies of the Fourth Industrial Revolution be harnessed to promote trade within the context of AfCFTA, while creating new pathways for jobs creation and recovering from COVID-19?

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