

Concept Note

Industrialization Policy Webinar Series

on

**“Building Sustainable Resilience: Post-COVID Recovery and
Coping Strategies in Southern Africa”**

Virtual

29 March 2023

1. Background

The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), Sub regional Office for Southern Africa (SRO-SA) is organising a webinar under an initiative to promote the accelerated implementation of regional and national industrialization policies for inclusive and sustainable development in Southern Africa¹. This is the third webinar in this series of reflective discussions intended to support industrialization in the region. Industrialization and industrial development through the enhancement of productive capacities, diversification and value addition is key to supporting inclusive and sustainable growth in the region. The Webinar series is anchored on the findings and policy recommendations from background studies undertaken by SRO-SA as part of overall support to regional industrialization efforts. This webinar will bring together representatives of governments and development partners, experts and the private sector to share insights, experiences, and discuss post-COVID recovery, coping strategies, and sustainable economic growth in the region.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought unprecedented challenges to economies and social systems across the globe albeit at different levels. The pandemic negatively impacted on public health, economic development, and social well-being across the sub region. Stakeholders, including governments and businesses, implemented measures to curb the spread of the virus, which resulted in massive disruptions to economic activities, job losses, reduced trade and investments, and decreased revenue. The spill- overs of the Russia-Ukraine war have further undermined recovery in member States. These crises have exposed the vulnerabilities of the region and highlighted the need for building resilience to cope with future challenges. This webinar seeks to explore post-COVID recovery, coping strategies, and sustainable economic growth as key themes in building resilience in the region.

The ECA Subregional Office for Southern Africa commissioned a study entitled: “*COVID-19 and regional economic development: Impact, coping strategies and post-COVID recovery in Southern Africa*” to build an understanding of the impacts of the pandemic and the strategies that were being deployed by Governments and stakeholders. Among others, the study revealed the cascading adverse socio-economic effects in the region. There were direct impacts on health and health systems across the member States due to the interconnectedness of systems, countries, communities and societies. The adverse consequences were more severe on the most vulnerable groups. The accompanying measures by authorities to contain the virus, together with the pre-existing vulnerabilities led to a widespread cascading effect on other sectors such as tourism, trade and commerce, transport and logistics etc. In the aftermath of COVID-19 it has also become evident that while countries are on the path to recovery, this recovery has been uneven and fragile with many regional member States experiencing sluggish growth patterns. Yet the region has the potential for economic growth and development, with abundant natural resources, a young and growing population, and a strategic location for trade and investments. However, concerted efforts from governments, private sector, civil society, and development partners is needed to build resilience and anchor sustainable economic growth.

The need to address post-COVID recovery, develop and strengthen coping strategies, and push sustainable economic growth is imperative. The vulnerability of the region to external shocks is a direct result of the reliance on commodities, limited diversification of the economic base and susceptibility to climate change. Building resilience in Southern Africa requires a comprehensive approach that addresses the underlying drivers of vulnerability, including social, economic, and environmental factors. The webinar will bring together stakeholders to

¹ Angola, Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe

discuss practical and innovative ways to promote resilience, accelerate recovery and accelerate sustainable economic growth in the region. Through discussion of the key themes of; post-Covid-19 recovery, coping strategies and the role of the UN and Development Partners in supporting recovery and building resilience, participants will gain a deeper understanding of the challenges facing the region and identify potential strategies for building resilience and promoting sustainable economic development.

2. Objectives

The webinar will discuss post-COVID recovery, coping strategies, and the role of the UN/Development Partners in supporting recovery and building resilience. Participants will explore practical and innovative ways to build resilience in the region and promote sustainable economic growth.

Specifically, the webinar will;

- i. Provide a platform for stakeholders to discuss practical ways to promote resilience and sustainable economic growth in the region post COVID-19.
- ii. Provide insights into the impact of COVID-19 on the region's economies and social systems, and innovative coping strategies and approaches to build resilience.
- iii. Provide a platform for disseminating the findings and recommendation of the ECA study; encourage sharing of experiences and lessons learned from past crises; and develop policy recommendations for governments and organizations to accelerate recovery and promote resilience in Southern Africa.

3. Format

The event will consist of 45-minute panel discussions and interactive sessions on the following topics:

- i. Socio-economic impacts of COVID and recovery post COVID-19 - *Led by a representative from the National Economic Planning Entities or Ministries responsible for Ministries of Health.*
 - The session will explore strategies for post-COVID recovery, including policies and interventions aimed at supporting economic growth, job creation, and poverty reduction.
 - The session will explore ways of promoting mental health and well-being, building social support networks, and strengthening community resilience in the face of pandemics.
- ii. Supporting Recovery and Building Resilience: *The Role of the UN and Development Partners- Led by SRO-SA*
 - The session will explore the challenges of building a resilient economy that can withstand future crises and, sustainable development practices and their role in post-COVID recovery.

4. Participation

The webinar targets policymakers, academics, researchers, entrepreneurs, business leaders, civil society organizations, and development partners interested in the economic development of the Southern Africa region.

Language: The Webinar will be conducted in English.

5. Date and Venue

The Webinar will be held virtually on 29 March 2023.

6. Contact Details

Confirmation of participation and the request for additional information and all other communication on the Webinar should be addressed to:

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