



United Nations
Economic Commission for Africa

**Joint session of the Intergovernmental Committee
of Senior Officials and Experts for Central and
East Africa on the theme:**

***“Strengthening Resilience, Economic Growth and
Diversification in a Context of Global Instability and
Shocks: The Role of Special Economic Zones, Innovative
Finance, Tourism and the African Continental Free Trade
Area”***

Draft concept note

2022

I. CONTEXT AND RATIONALE

The Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts (ICSOE) is the supervisory body for the activities of the Sub-Regional Offices (SROs) of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). It is a forum for exchange between experts from Member States, regional economic communities and their specialized institutions, the private sector, researchers, civil society and other technical and financial partners. The ICSOE meets every year to define and monitor the implementation of the SROs work program and discuss the main issues and challenges related to the economic and social development of each sub-region with a view to formulating appropriate recommendations to address them.

ECA brought an innovation this year by merging two initiatives usually organized separately through the joint session of the ICSOE of Central and East Africa because of the similarity of the development challenges that these two sub-regions face.

The joint session of the ICSOE will be held **from 15 to 18 November 2022**, under the theme "**Strengthening Resilience, Economic Growth and Diversification in a Context of Global Instability and Shocks: The Role of Special Economic Zones, Innovative Finance, Tourism and the African Continental Free Trade Area**".

The choice of this theme is justified by the persistent impact of the COVID-19 pandemic which has had negative repercussions on most economies around the world, including those in Central and East Africa. Both sub-regions continue to be impacted by rising food prices, driven in part by climate-related crises but also by the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian war which is exacerbating economic and social vulnerabilities. Rising inflation due to the Ukraine crisis appears to be wiping out the gains of the post-COVID recovery. The Russian-Ukrainian conflict is undermining the post-pandemic recovery efforts that Central and East African countries have made at great sacrifice. Like the Covid-19 pandemic, the Ukrainian crisis not only hurts trade in Central and East Africa but also contributes to a drop in the inflow of foreign direct investment.

II. OBJECTIVE OF THE MEETING

The main objective of this joint session of the ICSOE is to examine regulatory issues related to the mandate and functioning of the sub-regional offices in Central and Eastern Africa, to allow experts to exchange on economic and social development issues, in order to identify realistic, integrative and sustainable options in relation to the theme of the meeting: "**Strengthening Resilience, Economic Growth and Diversification in a Context of Global Instability and Shocks: The Role of Special Economic Zones, Innovative Finance, Tourism and the African Continental Free Trade Area**".

The ICSOE meeting will deliberate specifically on the following points:

- What are the initiatives, approaches, policies and strategies that have been adopted for post-COVID-19 recovery and the Ukrainian crisis? How effective are they and what are their respective limitations? How could these be improved and mutually enriched in Central and East Africa?

- Challenges and opportunities of special economic zones for economic diversification in Central and East Africa;
- Opportunities and challenges of innovative development financing in Central and East Africa for economic diversification and long-term growth;
- How the AfCFTA can be leveraged to attract investment to the region;
- How can tourism contribute to economic diversification in Central and East Africa?
- Recommendations for policies, strategies, and options to improve prospects for resilience and investments.

III. ORGANIZATION AND FORMAT OF THE MEETING

The ICISOE meeting will last four days during which working documents prepared by ECA will be presented and discussed. Member States and partners who so wish will also make communications. All work will take place in plenary and parallel sessions to deepen discussions. Each presentation will be followed by debates.

The central theme entitled "**Strengthening resilience, economic growth and diversification in a context of instability and global shocks: the role of special economic zones, innovative finance, tourism and the African Continental Free Trade Area**" will be the subject of presentations followed by discussions within the framework of high-level panels.

During the ICISOE meeting, **two ad hoc meetings of experts** will also be organized, the first on the legal and institutional aspects of SEZs in Central Africa and the second on the opportunities for urban tourism in East Africa.

IV. EXPECTED RESULTS OF THE MEETING

Participants will have a platform for exchanging and sharing best practices. The main recommendations resulting from the deliberations will constitute valuable contributions to the ECA cooperation strategy in Central and Eastern Africa, but also to the respective resilience and development strategies of all countries, RECs and other stakeholders.

In this regard, the following products are expected: (i) a statement of conclusions which will summarize the presentations, discussions and their main decisions, as well as recommendations, in particular those aimed at improving the activities carried out by the sub-regional offices of the Central and East Africa, and (ii) a report giving a detailed account of the debates.

The meeting will also make proposals on the theme, date and venue of the next ICISOE meeting.

V. PARTICIPATION

Will take part to the joint Session of the Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts from Central and East Africa, the most eminent decision-makers, in particular ministers and heads of institutions, and/or their high-ranking collaborators.

The Intergovernmental Committee will bring together representatives of Member States of Central and East Africa, the African Union Commission, RECs and intergovernmental bodies, as well as representatives of the private sector, international institutions, universities and research centers and civil society organizations, including women's and youth groups, think tanks and other relevant stakeholders.

VI. DATE AND PLACE OF THE MEETING

The joint session of the Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts from Central and East Africa will take place in Victoria, Seychelles, **from 15 to 18 November 2022.**

VII. WORKING LANGUAGES

The work will take place in French, English, Portuguese and Spanish, with simultaneous translation.

VIII. CONTACTS

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