

## Public-private partnerships to foster digital development of industry and trade in Southern Africa

**Organizers:** The Subregional Office for Southern Africa (SRO-SA) of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), in collaboration with the SADC Business Council and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).

**Background:** Sustainable Development Goal 9 is central to the realization of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 in the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The SADC Industrialization Strategy and Roadmap, 2015–2063, adopted in 2015 at the Summit of Heads of State and Government of SADC, delineates 14 essential requirements for harnessing industrialization as an engine of economic development and transformation of the SADC region, among which figure:

- (i) Utilizing information and communications technology as a catalyst and enabler for industrial transformation of the region;
- (ii) Establishing a compact for industrialization among governments, the private sector, civil society, development partners and prospective investors;
- (iii) Acknowledging the central role of the private sector, in particular small and medium-sized enterprises, as the driver of industrialization.

Furthermore, the SADC Digital 2027 Agenda demonstrates the willingness of the Southern African region to harness digitalization as a means of enhancing trade and industrial competitiveness. The interface between trade and industry is key to unleashing socioeconomic transformation in Africa.

**Objective:** This side event is aimed at generating constructive dialogue involving the public sector (governments) and the private sector (entrepreneurs, investors and non-governmental organizations) in analysing how digitalization can aid trade, industrial transformation and the advancement of Goal 9 in SADC. This side event will serve as follow up to a sensitization forum for the private sector held on 6 November 2020, organized by SRO-SA in collaboration with the SADC Business Council and UNIDO. It will further the dialogue initiated at the forum on post-COVID-19 recovery strategies in Southern Africa.

### Questions for discussion:

1. How can the public and private sectors play complementary roles in addressing challenges and harnessing opportunities for industry and trade that arise from digitalization?
2. What are the potential areas for public-private partnerships?
3. What should be the key elements of strategic policies to promote digital industrialization, entrepreneurship and trade in SADC, considering the short- and expected long-term impact of Covid-19?

**Expected outcome:** Participants will establish a road map for using public-private partnerships as a framework for fostering the digital development of industry and trade in the Southern African region.

**Target audience:** Officials of ministries of finance, planning and economic development, trade and industry, information and communications technology; representatives of regional economic communities, the private sector and non-governmental organizations; and various organizations.

**Venue and date:** Virtual (Zoom link to be shared) Sat., March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021, 2:00 – 3:30 PM ET Time.

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