

#COM2021 Bulletin



Youth can drive



P2

Smooth functioning



P2

Free movement



P3

New Report



P3

Public-private partnerships



P4



EXPERTS CALL ON ECA TO CONTINUE SUPPORTING MEMBER STATES' BID TO ACCESS MORE RESOURCES TO EFFECTIVELY RESPOND TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The meeting of the committee of experts of the Conference of African Ministers ended Friday ahead of the African Finance Ministers Meeting on Monday and agreed on a number of issues, among them the need for the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) to support advocacy by member States for the extension of the Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI) until at least the end of 2021, freeing up an additional \$8 billion for recovery in 2021 and providing much-needed liquidity to respond to the crisis. The experts, who commended the think tank for its advocacy and substantive support for a new issuance and re-allocation of Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) to low- and middle-income

countries, called on the Commission to mobilize support for a Special Drawing Rights re-allocation mechanism that is commensurate with the development financing needs of African countries. Member States were encouraged to work collectively to ensure they have a common voice and position on the issue of SDRs.

G7 Finance Ministers agreed Friday to support the issuance of new SDRs which will help developing countries better respond to the COVID 19 pandemic.

The experts were concerned by the adverse socioeconomic and health impacts of the pandemic on African

economies, coupled with their limited fiscal and monetary tools to respond to the crisis, which they said would most likely derail efforts to build forward better and to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Africa's Agenda 2063.

On COVID-19, the experts commended various initiatives undertaken by ECA to support Member States in leveraging the adoption of the African Union Commission and Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention Joint Continental Strategy for COVID-19 Outbreak in March 2020 as a blueprint and master plan for coordinating regional efforts to ensure synergy and minimize duplication, to

YOUTH CAN DRIVE AFRICA'S INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT WITH ENABLING POLICIES TO FOSTER THEIR INNOVATIONS & ENTREPRENEURIAL ZEAL



Young entrepreneurs can propel Africa's industrialization, the ECA noted at the weekend, calling for enabling policy and infrastructure to promote their digital innovations in solving the continent's development challenges.

Jean Paul Adam, Director for Technology, Climate Change and Natural Resources Management at the ECA, in a keynote address at a side event on 'Driving Africa's industrialisation agenda by investing in youth's digital innovations post COVID-19', said the ECA was emphasizing recovery and reset in responding to the pandemic and that

the youth were a critical part of this strategy.

"We need to reset our development framework for Africa to succeed and digitalisation will play a key role in this," Mr. Adam told the youth panel discussion, explaining that reset was about reconsidering sustainable development for Africa and tapping the energy of young people to build forward better.

"Young people are key agents of that reset," he added. "The digital space should be one of empowerment and not restriction."

Continue on page 5

SMOOTH FUNCTIONING OF CORRIDORS IMPORTANT FOR AFRICA'S SUSTAINABLE INDUSTRIALIZATION & DIVERSIFICATION

Land locked developing countries (LLDCs) are vulnerable to fluctuations which were further aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in border closures that continue to affect the movement of goods and people. A high-level roundtable on Saturday discussed possible measures that can be taken to address some of these challenges and support LLDCs during this critical time.

In opening remarks to the meeting, Mr. Francis Ikome, Chief of the Regional Integration Section in the Economic Commission for Africa's Regional Integration and Trade Division, said the think tank has a continuing interest in the development of LLDCs. He said within the scope of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AFCFTA) lay an opportunity to promote the smooth functioning of corridors, easing life for Africa's LLDCs.

He said Africa's infrastructure deficit posed a challenge that brings about additional costs in trade, especially for the LLDCs. Mr. Ikome noted that African LLDCs were making commendable progress as noted by the mid-term review report of the Vienna programme of action, but still had a long way to go. He also recognized the importance of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development and the African union's agenda 2063 in the development of LLDCs, adding that no country will be able to overcome the pandemic alone and therefore collaboration was key.

"Corridors create opportunities for industrialization and are vectors of market growth. The AFCFTA provides an opportunity for promoting smooth functioning of corridors for sustainable industrialization and diversification during the COVID-19 era," said Mr. Ikome.



Continue on page 5

FREE MOVEMENT OF PEOPLE CRITICAL TO BOOST INTRA-AFRICAN TRADE UNDER THE AFCFTA, SAYS ECA'S DAVID LUKE

Getting the Free Movement Protocol right will be critical to securing gains from the game-changing African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), says David Luke, Coordinator of the African Trade Policy Centre (ATPC) at the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA).

In opening remarks to an IOM side event on Digitalizing Migration Response to harness Africa's Economic Development and Demographic Dividend in the COVID-19 Era, Mr. Luke said the freedom of movement of people, capital, goods and services are the aspired four basic freedoms which make up the African continental and regional integration agendas.

He said this is why the Abuja Treaty establishing the African Economic Community, which was adopted by the Organization for African Unity in 1991, envisioned the "free movement of people and the rights of residence and establishment".

"This represents the fifth phase of the Abuja Treaty which is expected to be realized by 2023," Mr. Luke told delegates attending the event ahead of Monday's Conference of African Ministers of Finance hosted by the ECA.

The Protocol to the Treaty on the Establishment of the African Economic Community relating to Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment was adopted in January 2018 together with a comprehensive implementation roadmap.

"Yet there has been a slow pace of signature and ratification of the protocol," said the ATPC Coordinator.

The protocol must be ratified by 15 Member States to enter into force. Only 32 Member States have signed the Protocol but only one, Rwanda, has ratified it.

Various reasons have been offered to explain the obstacles in the ratification of the Protocol, including the desire of

Continue on page 5



EXPERTS CALL ...

Cont'd from page 1

save lives and support African social and economic development.

They commended the various initiatives undertaken by ECA in supporting member States in the World Trade Organization Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights on vaccines, debt relief and the issuance of Special Drawing Rights by the International Monetary Fund.

The experts requested ECA, in collaboration with the African Union Commission and all relevant

stakeholders, including the private sector, to assist African Member States in putting in place continental strategies and policies to facilitate the production of vaccines on the continent, improve pooled procurement, particularly through digital technologies, as exemplified by the African Medical Supply Platform, and leverage the use of digital tools in national supply chains for improved accessibility for all.

This will improve affordability and accessibility of vaccines and assist in generating inclusive economic

Continue on page 4

NEW REPORT ON IMPACT OF COVID-19 SHOWS E-COMMERCE TO PLAY A HUGE ROLE IN AFRICA'S ECONOMIC RECOVERY

A new report launched by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) on the impact of COVID-19 on e-commerce in Africa, shows that the sector and the digital economy grew considerably throughout the decade ending in 2019. The report shows that the COVID-19 pandemic, bad as it is with the associated health and economic impacts, has opened up new opportunities for the continent's digital economy.

According to authors of the report, launched March 20, 2021 at a side event at the ECA's annual Conference of African Ministers of Finance,

Planning and Economic Development, the growth of the sector was made possible by improved Internet penetration rates, reduced Internet costs and growth of mobile telephony.

One of the authors, Guy Futi, said in a presentation that by 2019 Africa had registered unprecedented growth in digitalization with some 290 million people connected to the Internet, an investment of US\$1.4 billion in venture capital and more than 30 per cent of adults in South Africa, Nigeria, Egypt and Kenya reporting owning mobile phones.

Continue on page 6



PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS CRUCIAL TO FOSTER DIGITAL DEVELOPMENT OF INDUSTRY AND TRADE IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

Industrialization cannot be economically viable without trade and trade cannot bring significant benefits to southern Africa without industrialization, says Sizo Mhlanga, Acting Director of the Economic Commission for Southern Africa (ECA SRO-SA).

Speaking at a Conference of Ministers of Finance (COM2021) side event held Saturday, Mr. Mhlanga said, "These two economic forces must be developed together. And when it comes to trade in Africa, more of it should come from the region itself, in order to allow the region to industrialize and reduce its dependence on volatile global markets."

"We all hope that the African Continental Free Trade Area will help southern Africa achieve just that - industrialize and trade for greater prosperity."

Mr. Mhlanga said digitalization was fast becoming an increasing priority for SADC and African Member States as witnessed by the African Union's Digital Transformation Strategy and the SADC Digital 2027 Agenda. Digitalization, he added, was a lever in the

building back better process in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The side event was organized to analyze and discuss the role that digitalization can play and should play in fostering trade and industrial development in the region and what such a role implies for public-private partnerships in southern Africa, be it in the areas of building soft and hard digital infrastructure, addressing skills gap, addressing competitiveness challenges for companies, relieving the financing gaps of countries in the region and enhancing cross-border trade.

Both the public and the private sectors have to increasingly collaborate if the region is to address its myriad development challenges, said Mr. Mhlanga, adding the event was critical for the region to progress further on the achievement of SDG 9 in order to reduce poverty, create decent jobs, empower women and youth and reduce inequalities.

Mr. Peter Vardell, Chief Executive Officer of the Southern African Development Community (SADC Business Council); Mr. Bernardo



Continue on page 8

EXPERTS CALL ...

Cont'd from page 3

growth, stimulating job creation, and eradicating poverty for the continent's socio-economic development and sustainable growth.

The ECA was urged to continue supporting member States in vaccine procurement, including through additional funding available from debt relief of the G20 Debt Service Suspension Initiative, development finance institutions and SDRs.

On the African Continental Free Trade Area, the experts urged the ECA to provide technical support to its Member States, the African Union Commission, the secretariat of the African Continental Free Trade Area,

and Regional Economic Communities, in respect of agricultural development, industrialization, high-priority continental infrastructure projects, digitalization, implementation of national strategies for the AfCFTA, and phase II and phase III negotiations. On data and statistics, they called on Pan-African organizations and partners to work in close collaboration and foster synergies to support African countries, in particular those with the lowest levels of statistical development, to mitigate the impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

The experts said steps should be taken to ensure that key targets and indicators of the 2030 Agenda and

Agenda 2063 are incorporated into national development plans as well as the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework to expanding current national data systems to new data frontiers, such as earth observation and geospatial big data, in support of integrated spatial planning and inclusive and sustainable growth.

On civil registration and vital statistics, the experts urged African Governments to invest in fully functional legal identity systems, with a foundation built on strong civil registration systems that start at birth and end at death, and digitize processes, from notification to certification, to transform civil registration systems from slow, passive,

and reactive systems that depend on in-person attendance, to systems that are dynamic, interoperable, resilient, proactive, and agile.

Among many other recommendations, the experts called on the ECA to establish an African expert group on gas to advise member States on how to unlock the potential of gas in industrialization and the transition to clean energy.

For more on the outcome of the meeting, click here: <https://papersmart.uneca.org/meeting/303/programme>

YOUTH CAN DRIVE ...

Cont'd from page 2

The ECA Director said Africa was impacted more than other regions in the context of COVID-19 and climate change due to its vulnerability, lack of safety nets and minimal fiscal space to adequately respond to such issues.

“We need to respond. We need to address the immediate impact we are facing in terms of lost jobs, in terms of economic opportunities which have been disrupted and we also need to recover from the initial impacts of the crisis of this unprecedented magnitude.”

Mr. Adam said 110 million young people entered the job market in the last ten years but only 37 million wage paying jobs were created. COVID19 has further shrunk that job market. The pandemic, however, has presented opportunities for a reset and green recovery for Africa around sustainable

energy access for more than 590 million people without access to electricity.

Investments in renewable energy are an opportunity for better and more inclusive employment. A recent study by the ECA using the case study of South Africa has shown that more than 250 percent more jobs can be created as opposed to investing in fossil fuels.

Mr. Adam said digital services were also an opportunity to move Africa's commerce into the digital space. Digital deliverable services for Africa have grown 2.5-fold since 2005 in a global market valued at an estimated \$2.9 trillion.

Noting that digitalization was central to the green industrialization process in Africa, Mr. Adam said consideration should be made on which specific digital

Continue on page 8



SMOOTH FUNCTIONING ...

Cont'd from page 2

For her part, the African Union Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy, Ms. Amina Abou-Zeid, said the AUC also pays special attention to corridors to ensure LLDCs are connected and that trade flows easily.

“Corridors don't work alone. They need to be linked to ports which are affected by challenges like border control harassment and lengthy queues at the borders resulting in delays,” she said.

“One of the ways of tackling these challenges is digitalization, which provides an opportunity for facilitating the smooth flow of services. Digitalization goes beyond borders into e-commerce which has increased five-fold in the last year.”

Ms. Abou-Zeid also noted that energy, coupled with digitalization, offered immense opportunities for Africa's LLDCs.

She noted that the AUC, through the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, was working to harmonize health measures and necessary health credentials at borders to ease access and mobility to improve the fluidity of transport and flow of people.

For her part, Ms. Fekitamoela Utoikamanu, Under Secretary General, UN-OHRLS, noted that impacts of covid-19 affected the flow of transport

in LLDCs, hampering their access to equipment needed to adequately respond to the pandemic.

She highlighted the need to enhance the use of digital tools, for example, electronic cargo systems, tracking systems and digital payment systems to ensure that transit transport systems are sustainable.

Ms. Utoikamanu also called for the roll out of safe and effective covid-19 vaccines in land locked countries. “LLDCs by their nature are more reliant on regional and global cooperation and the AfCFTA offers an opportunity for them to be integrated into the African market,” she said.

Ms. Utoikamanu also noted that corridors were central to Africa's recovery from the pandemic and that transport and infrastructure were important for sustainable development.

Delegates looked at real life examples from the northern corridor transit and transport coordination authority (NCTCA) and Zambia. They noted the importance of digitalization to aid the smooth functioning of corridors for sustainable industrialization and diversification.

The participants also called for more collaboration and partnerships to aid Africa to recover better from the pandemic.

FREE MOVEMENT OF PEOPLE ...

Cont'd from page 3

States to maintain their sovereignty by having control over those who enter their territory; and a strong perception of security threats posed by free movement of persons, among others.

Mr. Luke said the concept of free movement of persons is often poorly understood.

“We must do better than this. Freer movement cannot depend only on the AfCFTA Protocol on Services that allows for movement in relation to investment and service delivery,” he said.

“True freedom of movement in Africa would instead allow African citizens to move to, live in, work, or provide a service or a business in another country on the continent, under the same or similar conditions as a citizen of that country.”

Moving forward, Mr. Luke said, there may be a need to redesign the Freedom of Movement Protocol to respond to concerns raised by policy makers to ensure that Africa's people can benefit fully from the liberalized market that is being created by the AfCFTA. This would also offer an opportunity to incorporate innovative solutions to the green and digital transitions within the Protocol.

Regional Economic Communities (RECs), which have faced their own challenges with ratification and implementation of Free Movement Protocols, have a role to play in promoting increased understanding of the free movement concept, he said.

“It is the free movement of people which will boost intra-African trade under the AfCFTA, and enable African countries to pro-actively and swiftly respond to the

Continue on page 7

LA LIBRE CIRCULATION DES PERSONNES EST ESSENTIELLE POUR STIMULER LE COMMERCE INTRA-AFRICAIN DANS LE CADRE DE LA ZLECAF, DÉCLARE DAVID LUKE DE LA CEA

La mise en place du protocole de libre circulation sera essentielle pour garantir les gains de la Zone de libre-échange continentale africaine (ZLECAF) révolutionnaire, déclare David Luke, Coordonnateur du Centre africain pour la politique commerciale (ATPC), à la Commission économique pour l'Afrique (CEA).

Dans son discours d'ouverture d'un événement parallèle de l'OIM sur la numérisation de la réponse à la migration pour exploiter le développement économique et le dividende démographique de l'Afrique dans le contexte de la COVID-19, M. Luke déclare que la liberté de circulation des personnes, des capitaux, des biens et des services sont les quatre libertés fondamentales qui constituent les agendas d'intégration continentale et régionale africaine.

Il dit que c'est la raison pour laquelle le Traité d'Abuja instituant la Communauté économique africaine, qui a été adopté par l'Organisation de l'unité africaine en 1991, envisageait « la libre circulation des personnes et les droits de résidence et d'établissement ».

« Il s'agit de la cinquième phase du Traité d'Abuja, qui doit être réalisée d'ici 2023 », affirme M. Luke aux délégués participant à l'événement, en marge de la Conférence des ministres africains des finances, ce lundi, organisée par la CEA.

Le Protocole au Traité sur la création de la Communauté économique africaine relatif à la libre circulation des personnes, au droit de séjour et au droit d'établissement a été adopté en janvier 2018 avec une feuille de route de mise en œuvre complète.

« Pourtant, le rythme concernant la signature et la ratification du protocole



Suite à la page 7

UN NOUVEAU RAPPORT SUR L'IMPACT DE LA COVID-19 MONTRE QUE LE COMMERCE ÉLECTRONIQUE JOUE UN RÔLE MAJEUR DANS LA RELANCE ÉCONOMIQUE DE L'AFRIQUE



Un nouveau rapport lancé par la Commission économique pour l'Afrique (CEA) sur l'impact de la COVID-19 sur le commerce électronique en Afrique, montre que le secteur et l'économie numérique ont considérablement augmenté tout au long de la décennie se terminant en 2019. Le rapport montre que la pandémie de COVID-19, aussi grave soit-elle avec les effets sanitaires et économiques associés, a ouvert de nouvelles opportunités pour l'économie numérique du continent.

Selon les auteurs du rapport, lancé le 20 mars 2021 lors d'un événement parallèle, à la Conférence annuelle des ministres africains des finances, de la planification et du développement économique de la CEA, la croissance du secteur a été rendue

possible grâce à l'amélioration des taux de pénétration d'Internet, à la réduction des coûts d'Internet et à la croissance de la téléphonie mobile.

L'un des auteurs, Guy Futi, déclare dans une présentation qu'en 2019, l'Afrique a enregistré une croissance sans précédent de la numérisation avec quelque 290 millions de personnes connectées à Internet, un investissement de 1,4 milliard de dollars américains en capital-risque et plus de 30% des adultes en Afrique du Sud, au Nigéria, en Égypte et au Kenya déclarent posséder des téléphones portables.

Si le rapport souligne que le régime réglementaire de l'Afrique n'a pas encore

Suite à la page 9

ON IMPACT OF COVID-19 ...

Cont'd from page 3

While the report pointed out that Africa's regulatory regime was yet to catch up with the speed with which the digital sector was growing, in general, it remained patchy and characterized by poor enforceability. The growth of mobile technology, among the other factors, built a fertile foundation that could be buttressed by developments in venture capital and funding, online payments, and logistics.

"We arrive at the conclusion that the digital economy can be a powerful catalyst for Africa's economy with the potential to alleviate many of the economic burdens of COVID-19. But more importantly, e-commerce and digital trade can serve as a powerful engine for the economic recovery now required," the authors of the report said.

The authors believe that unprecedented socio-economic factors such as Africa's demographic dividends - 50 per cent of its citizens under the age of 35 - with

500 million mobile money accounts, there could be US\$500 billion worth of digital commerce by 2030.

One of the authors, Jamie McLeod, said the report was based on interviews with tech companies in Africa.

Some of the highlights of the report covered the range from the growth of venture capital funding in Africa to advances made in mobile and Internet penetration. This part of the report demonstrates a rapidly changing digital environment that still has much to accomplish.

The report notes that cheaper mobile handsets have played a significant role in the region's Internet penetration.

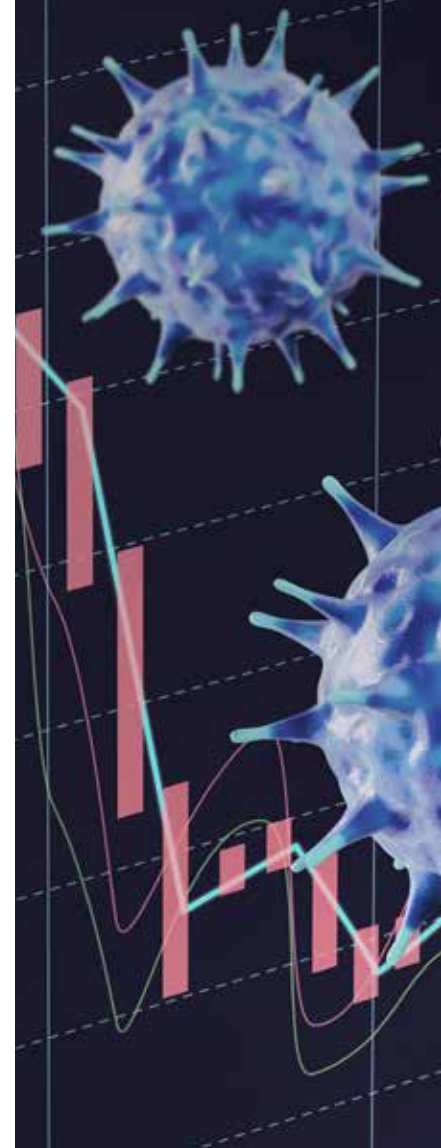
"Transsion and Samsung, who control the bulk of the market share on smartphones sold in Africa, have produced handhelds specifically targeted for the limited spending power of Africans. More than 83 per

cent of smartphones sold in Africa during the last quarter of 2019 had a price tag of US\$200 or less," the report said.

It said the largest mobile operators on the continent have continued to experience sustained revenue growth.

Safaricom, one of East and Central Africa's largest operators, grew its revenues from US\$1.63 billion in 2016 to US\$2.20 billion in 2019. The MTN Group in 2019 generated US\$2.75 billion of revenue from its Nigerian subsidiary, and US\$2.67 billion from its South African subsidiary.

Airtel Africa, with a presence in more than 14 countries on the continent, recorded US\$3.01 billion in revenue in 2019. Maroc Telecom, operating out of North Africa, grew its revenues from US\$2.77 billion in 2016 to US\$3.99 billion in 2019.



FREE MOVEMENT OF PEOPLE ...

Cont'd from page 5

twin green and digital transitions we are faced with in the 2020s," Mr. Luke said.

"We cannot afford to not build seamless borders for tomorrow's Africa," he said and proposed that the ATPC and IOM consider to jointly organize a series of awareness raising events on the Free Movement Protocol with the Government of Rwanda as a key partner.

As the only African country to have ratified the protocol, and as one of 11 African countries offering visa-free or visa-on entry to Africans, Rwanda is a pioneer of free movement on the continent, and can offer important lessons of experience for other countries, added Mr. Luke.

For his part, Mr. Jean-Denis Gabikini, the acting director of the Directorate of Economic Development Integration and

Trade at the African Union Commission, said the continent was letting its youth down, resulting in increased migration.

"At least 60% of Africa's population is aged below 24 years and its active contribution to economic growth which is reflected by increased incomes and development is not there," Gabikini said.

"Instead of making the most of this dividend we are unable to offer jobs to our youth, forcing them to seek livelihoods elsewhere."

The side event is part of the 53rd session of the Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development being held under the theme; Africa's sustainable industrialisation and diversification in the digital era in the context of Covid-19.

LA LIBRE CIRCULATION ...

Suite de la page 6

s'avère lent », affirme le Coordonnateur d'ATPC.

Le protocole doit être ratifié par 15 États membres pour entrer en vigueur. Seuls 32 États membres ont signé le protocole mais un seul, le Rwanda, l'a ratifié.

Diverses raisons sont avancées expliquant les obstacles à la ratification du Protocole, notamment la volonté des États de maintenir leur souveraineté en contrôlant ceux qui entrent sur leur territoire ; et une forte perception des menaces à la sécurité posées par la libre circulation des personnes, entre autres.

M. Luke dit que le concept de libre circulation des personnes est souvent mal compris.

« Nous devons faire mieux que cela. Une circulation plus libre ne peut pas dépendre uniquement du protocole de la ZLECAf sur les services qui permet la circulation en matière d'investissement et de prestation de services », dit-il.

« La véritable liberté de mouvement en Afrique permettrait plutôt aux citoyens africains de s'installer, de vivre, de travailler ou d'offrir un service ou une activité commerciale dans un autre pays du continent, dans des conditions identiques ou similaires à celles d'un citoyen de ce pays ».

Suite à la page 9

PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS ...

Cont'd from page 4

Calzadilla-Sarmiento, Managing Director, Directorate of Digitalization, Technology and Agri-business, UNIDO, and Mr. Kebour Ghenna, Executive Director, Pan-African Chamber of Commerce and Industry, were some of the high-level participants at the side event. They were all agreed that public-private partnerships are crucial to foster digital development of industry and trade in southern Africa.

The side event generated constructive dialogue involving governments in the region, the private sector - entrepreneurs,

investors and nongovernmental organizations - in analyzing how digitalization can aid trade, industrial transformation and the advancement of Goal 9 in SADC.

Held under the theme; Public-private partnerships to foster digital development of industry and trade in Southern Africa, the side event was organized in collaboration with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Business Council.



YOUTH CAN DRIVE ...

Cont'd from page 5

skills should be invested in as well as upgrading digital infrastructure like internet, enhancing digital services, digital identities, and online payment systems.

"We have to ensure access to markets for young people," he said, adding that young entrepreneurs must have access to finance and the procurement space. E-commerce has emerged as trade facilitator, Mr. Adam added, and the AfCFTA must be leveraged to facilitate trade for young people.

"If we empower young people to enter the digital space and create their own business space, we can expect that every young person will probably create one other job for another person. This is the promise that we have for that reset in reviewing the development architecture we believe is necessary for the empowerment of young people and green recovery for Africa."

Mathews Mmopi, the international chairperson of the Youth Alliance for Leadership and Development in Africa (YALDA), said COVID-19 has changed the role of work and young people have been impacted, particularly within education.

Mmopi said the youth who represent most of the African population, were at the forefront of utilising, innovating, and leveraging digital opportunities to improve access across economic, social, and political spheres.

Erickson Mvezi, founder, and CEO of Tupuca, an on-demand delivery platform in Angola, said Africa's youth were spirited entrepreneurs but operated under difficult conditions.

For Nneile Nkholise, a young entrepreneur and founder of IMedTech Group, a medical solutions company, governments in Africa should create

the right infrastructure such as roads to facilitate business and remove barriers to rolling out digital innovations.

Ahmed Bastawy, who runs Icealex Innovation Hub, which supports start-ups and entrepreneurs in Egypt, called for the right policies, laws and incentives to promote start-ups and digital innovations across Africa.

For Bashiru Mansaray, trust is a critical element in promoting youth entrepreneurs in Africa where they are largely marginalised from accessing big contracts because they are considered to lack experience and the ability to deliver.

Concurring on the importance of trusting young people to deliver development projects, Mountaga Keita, Guinean inventor and founder of Tulip Industries which designs and manufactures interactive

digital kiosks and tablets, lamented that governments were quick to import and outsource technologies from other countries at the expense of local innovations.

"The digital sector is a powerhouse for wealth creation and job creation," Keita said.

"In Tulip we decided to go Africa and thanks to the African Continental Free Trade Area we have now signed a contract with 23 countries and hope by 2021 to go to all countries in Africa. We are tapping into an untapped market. Government must dance with us or else we will dance with other people," he said.

"Africa's sustainable industrialisation and diversification in the digital era in the context of Covid-19" is the theme for this year's conference.

LA LIBRE CIRCULATION ...

Suite de la page 6

Pour aller de l'avant, M. Luke indique qu'il serait peut-être nécessaire de repenser le Protocole sur la liberté de circulation afin de répondre aux préoccupations soulevées par les décideurs pour garantir que les populations africaines puissent profiter pleinement du marché libéralisé créé par la ZLECAf. Cela offrirait également l'occasion d'incorporer des solutions innovantes aux transitions verte et numérique dans le cadre du Protocole.

Les Communautés économiques régionales (CER), qui ont fait face à leurs propres défis avec la ratification et la mise en œuvre des Protocoles de libre circulation, ont un rôle à jouer dans la promotion d'une meilleure compréhension du concept de libre circulation, ajoute-t-il.

« C'est la libre circulation des personnes qui stimulera le commerce intra-africain dans le cadre de la ZLECAf et permettra aux pays africains de répondre de manière proactive et rapide aux doubles transitions verte et numérique auxquelles nous sommes confrontés dans les années 2020 », déclare M. Luke.

« Nous ne pouvons nous permettre de ne pas construire des frontières transparentes pour l'Afrique de demain », dit-il et propose que l'ATPC et l'OIM s'engagent à organiser conjointement une série d'événements de sensibilisation sur le Protocole de libre circulation avec le Gouvernement du Rwanda comme partenaire clé.

En tant que seul pays africain à avoir ratifié le Protocole et en tant que l'un

des 11 pays africains offrant une entrée sans visa ou avec visa aux Africains, le Rwanda est un pionnier de la libre circulation sur le continent et peut offrir d'importantes leçons d'expérience à d'autres pays, ajoute M. Luke.

Pour sa part, M. Jean-Denis Gabikini, Directeur par intérim de la Direction du développement économique, de l'intégration et du commerce, à la Commission de l'Union africaine, déclare que le continent abandonne sa jeunesse, entraînant ainsi une augmentation des migrations.

« Au moins 60% de la population africaine est âgée de moins de 24 ans et sa contribution active à la croissance économique, qui se traduit par une augmentation des revenus et du

développement, est absente », déclare Gabikini.

« Au lieu de tirer le meilleur parti de ce dividende, nous sommes incapables d'offrir des emplois à nos jeunes, ce qui les oblige à chercher des moyens de subsistance ailleurs ».

L'événement parallèle fait partie de la 53ème session de la Conférence des ministres africains des finances, de la planification et du développement économique, de la Commission économique pour l'Afrique qui se tient sous le thème, « Industrialisation durable et diversification de l'Afrique à l'ère du numérique dans le contexte de la Covid-19 ».

UN NOUVEAU RAPPORT ...

Suite de la page 6

rattrapé la vitesse à laquelle le secteur numérique se développe, en général, il reste inégal et est caractérisé par une faible applicabilité. La croissance de la technologie mobile, entre autres facteurs, a construit une base fertile qui pourrait être étayée par les développements du capital-risque et du financement, des paiements en ligne et de la logistique.

« Nous arrivons à la conclusion que l'économie numérique peut être un puissant vecteur de l'économie africaine avec le potentiel d'alléger bon nombre des fardeaux économiques de la COVID-19. Mais plus important encore, le commerce électronique et le commerce numérique peuvent servir de moteur puissant pour la relance économique désormais requise », affirment les auteurs du rapport.

Les auteurs estiment que des facteurs socio-économiques sans précédent tels que les dividendes démographiques de l'Afrique - 50% de ses citoyens ont moins de 35 ans - avec 500 millions de comptes d'argent mobile, pourraient générer 500 milliards de dollars américains de commerce numérique d'ici 2030.

L'un des auteurs, Jamie McLeod, déclare que le rapport est basé sur des entretiens avec des entreprises de technologie en Afrique.

Certains des points saillants du rapport couvrent la gamme allant de la croissance du financement du capital-risque en Afrique aux progrès réalisés dans la pénétration de la téléphonie mobile et d'Internet. Cette partie du

rapport illustre un environnement numérique en évolution rapide qui a encore beaucoup à accomplir.

Le rapport note que les téléphones portables moins chers ont joué un rôle important dans la pénétration d'Internet dans la région.

« Transsion et Samsung, qui contrôlent la plus grande partie des parts de marché sur les smartphones vendus en Afrique, ont produit des portables spécifiquement ciblés pour le pouvoir d'achat limité des Africains. Plus de 83% des smartphones vendus en Afrique au cours du dernier trimestre de 2019 coûtaient plus ou moins 200 dollars américains », indique le rapport.

Il déclare que les plus grands opérateurs de téléphonie mobile du continent ont continué d'enregistrer

une croissance soutenue de leurs revenus.

Safaricom, l'un des plus grands opérateurs d'Afrique orientale et centrale, a augmenté ses revenus de 1,63 milliard de dollars américains en 2016 à 2,20 milliards de dollars américains en 2019. Le groupe MTN a généré en 2019 2,75 milliards de dollars américains de revenus de sa filiale nigériane et 2,67 milliards de dollars américains de sa filiale Sud-Africaine.

Airtel Africa, présent dans plus de 14 pays du continent, a enregistré un chiffre d'affaires de 3,01 milliards USD en 2019. Maroc Telecom, opérant depuis l'Afrique du Nord, a augmenté ses revenus de 2,77 milliards USD en 2016 à 3,99 milliards USD en 2019.

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