ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL TRANSITION (Parallel Session, STA 4)

20 November 2018, 14:30-17:30

Context: Africa has gone through multiple and sometimes concurrent economic and social transitions. Largely, the continent has witnessed three interrelated transitions namely (i) an increase in the number of low-income countries graduating into middle-income status (rising GDP per capita) with implications for growth, business investments, income, employment creation and poverty reduction; (ii) rapid urban transition mostly driven by natural population increase. Africa is the least urbanized but the fastest urbanizing region in the world with small towns, secondary and primary cities growing exponentially in the last two decades; and (iii) a transition from rural-based economic structures to urban-based economies supported by manufacturing and modern services.

At the core of these transitions is the role of cities in economic and social development. Empirical evidence from McKinsey Global Institute\(^1\) shows that the expansion of cities has the potential for further growth and poverty reduction across many countries. Therefore, Africa’s rapid urban transition is one of the mega trends and defining opportunities of our time. The significance of urbanization and the role of cities in the economy is well documented and continues to inform many policy debates at regional, national and subnational levels.

Session description: While the role of cities in economic transformation is generally recognized, little is known on how African local and subnational authorities can engage the economic and social transitions that are taking place on the continent to improve people’s welfare including creating investment opportunities, productive jobs and inclusive and sustainable development. Against this backdrop, the session will focus on a broader discussion including whether the current policy landscape is favourable for Africa’s economic and social transition and the region’s development aspirations. It will also interrogate and analyse the potential benefits of cities through experience and knowledge sharing in order to tease out lessons learned and best practices from Africa’s standpoint with a view to enhancing the capacity of local and subnational authorities.

Specifically, the session will map out policy actions and strategies at city level in order to inform an assessment of potential benefits, quick wins (low-hanging fruits) and complementary actions necessary for an effective economic and social transition in Africa.

Finally, the session will identify major national and sub-national opportunities and challenges in economic and social transitions including those that relate to labour markets and employment opportunities for youth.

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Speakers

1- M. Benmbare, Conseil Economique et Social et Environnementale - TO BE CONFIRMED UCLGA TO HELP
2- Ms. Lilia Naas Hachem, Representative of Executive Secretary United Nations Economic Commission for Africa - CONFIRMED
3- Local Government representative Morocco - TO BE CONFIRMED, UCLGA TO HELP
4- Mr. Charles Mokuoane, Director of Decentralization, Ministry of Local Government Chieftainship Kingdom of Lesotho OR; Ms. Mathoriso Monaheng, Principal Secretary of Decentralization, Ministry of Local Government Chieftainship Kingdom of Lesotho - CONFIRMED
5- TO BE CONFIRMED. UCLGA TO IDENTIFY

Organiser: United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

Focal point: yemeru@un.org; zulu2@un.org